



ENGLAND AFTER WAR



# ENGLAND AFTER WAR

A STUDY

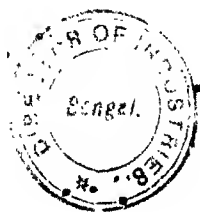
BY

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*Nil nisi Divinum stabile est, cetera fumus.*

MANTEGNA



MODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED LONDON

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TO  
MY WIFE



*This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-Paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,*

. . . . .

*This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land :—*





## P R E F A C E

SOME fourteen years ago, I published a study of the Condition of England which received a kindly acceptance from the reviewers and those who honoured me by reading it. The world of which I then wrote has vanished in the greatest secular catastrophe which has tormented mankind since the fall of Rome. I have been invited to write a similar volume concerning the condition of an England but struggling with difficulty to survive and re-establish civilisation, in a Europe where it is still uncertain whether civilisation as we understood it will endure. And the result is the present volume.

I have endeavoured to follow the conditions which I laid down in my former examination. I have attempted diagnosis—of health or disease. I have not suggested a cure for remediable maladies, for directly I commence to advocate a cure, I pass into the region of political controversy, which in such studies as these I wish to avoid. Any one interested enough to demand my own solutions of certain evils here described must find them in the writings and speeches which I am compelled to make as an advocate in the world of actual affairs.

And in this volume, as in the case of its predecessor, I would like to believe that the work is one of detachment; that I am examining, impartially and disinterestedly, a world in change; and that no one would be able to ascertain from these pages what my actual political or social opinions were, or to which, if any, party in the State I owed allegiance.



I remember that, in my former book, the critics (on the whole all too kind and generous) took exception in the main to two elements in it. On the one hand they criticised this "neutrality," and complained that, though I showed evils, I had shown no remedies. And this despite the fact that, in a preface similar to the present, I had declared that I had no intention of showing remedies. On the other hand they pronounced my conclusions to be too pessimistic in a world which was crowning itself with flowers and calling itself immortal, only six years before it was utterly destroyed.

Too pessimistic! There are very few rulers who will follow the example of the old King of Judah, who, although putting the prophet of evil on the bread and water of affliction, commanded that he be liberated if his prophecy came true. Amongst most of those who experience the evil when it comes, the man who said, "I told you so," is the first to be hanged on the gallows.

Yet my study was written, however imperfectly, with sincerity. And perhaps I may be permitted to quote a somewhat too rhetorical passage which summed up my amazement at the familiar optimism which then dominated England, and caused me to be branded as a pessimist. Writing on *The Illusion of Security*. "Those observers are justified at least in one contention," I then asserted, "that the future, whether in orderly progress, or in sudden or gradual retrogression, will be astonished at 'the illusion of security' in which to-day Society reposes; forgetting that but a thin crust separates it from the central elemental fires, and that the heart of the earth is a flame. . . . In no panic fear, certainly with no acquiescence and despair, the reformer to-day will contemplate the possible future of a Society beyond measure complex, baffling and uncertain in its energies and aims. But the warning, always useful,

## PREFACE

But now more than ever necessary, cannot be too strongly emphasised : that with the vertical division between nation and nation armed to the teeth, and the horizontal division between rich and poor, which has become a cosmopolitan fissure, the future of progress is still doubtful and precarious. Humanity—at best—appears but as a shipwrecked crew which has taken refuge on a narrow ledge of rock, beaten by wind and wave ; which cannot tell how many, if any at all, will survive when the long night gives place to morning. The wise man will still go softly all his days, working always for greater economic equality on the one hand, for understanding between estranged peoples on the other ; apprehending always how slight an effort of stupidity or violence could strike a death-blow to twentieth-century civilisation and elevate the forces of destruction triumphant over the ruins of a world."

For myself, I still remember in those far-off days looking on the structure of Society and the fissure between the nations with a kind of astonishment. The common abundant life of the people flowed on in tranquillity. Suffragettes were breaking windows and burning houses ; and Sir Edward Carson, with the assistance of all the country houses, was organising rebellion in Ulster. But few took these minor upheavals seriously. And for the most part the belief was dominant of a steady progress of Society eliminating the bitterness between rich and poor, and an increased understanding and sympathy removing all trace of so inconceivable a calamity as a European War.

And all the time the boys were growing up, expensively educated, with all the fond hopes of the family fixed upon what often seemed a secure and brilliant future ; who, before they were to attain manhood, were to perish like dumb animals in this most insensate of all attempts made by man to destroy his fellow-men.

I always recognised that the race was between the vertical and horizontal divisions. The vertical just won—only I think by a few years. The nations fought with all classes of one united against all classes of the other. But it was doubtful whether they might not have fought with the dispossessed of all nations fighting against those who had monopolised the instruments of production, as in old Rome, the slaves rose against their masters. In Russia the first fissure has directly caused the second, with what awful consequences no man can apprehend; and stability of the social system is not so secure that we can guarantee any nation not following the Russian example. Let us put our own house in order before it be too late, remembering the old challenge concerning those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell: “Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

This book was planned three years ago. But it soon became evident to me that had I produced it then, I should have produced a study of a purely transitory period which would have been untrue before the ink was dry on the pages. I believe now I have been able to portray something nearer a “stabilised” condition, although I struggle to hope that by some miracle of man’s intelligence and compassion, or of forces outside human control, much described in the following pages will be “unstabilised” in a not too remote future. But I think that I have begun to realise the main outline of social structure, the material and moral changes which are characteristic of the New World. If I have ventured on the gratuitous foolishness of prophecy, I deserve no mercy if that prophecy prove empty and vain. But these possible errors may perhaps excite thought, and stimulate the work of others; and the best minds of the country might well be occupied in detailed examination of “whether in general we are getting on, and whither in general we are going to.”

I have prefixed this book with the marvellous praise by Shakespeare of his little England. "The heart has its reasons which the mind knows not." And even when examining assertions which the intellect cannot challenge, one finds oneself again and again revolting against them and refusing to accept their conclusions as final. "This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England," despite the vanishing from its fields of those who loved her, is not going to be "let out like to a tenement, or pelling farm," to the casual indifference of the profiteer. And this "land of such dear souls," now seemingly so fierce and bitter one against the other and so lacking in all spiritual ideal, will regain once more the secrets of sacrifice, sincerity and compassion which have been lost in the madness of money-making and the madness of war. The English with all their faults (and they are conspicuous and on the surface) remain the finest race in the world. And so long as I live I shall hope that they also will realise that it is "fitter being sane than mad," and "safer being meek than fierce." I shall hope also in a movement which, whether in this time or in some future generation, may obtain confidence in "a change, which, being in our time or not for centuries, will one day make all lands holy lands again."

Lastly, I would only profess that at the end of the experience of fourteen years, many of them spent in office in the Governance of England, and many in profound misery at the passing of the best life of England, and profound anxiety lest England should be destroyed, I can only feel greater eagerness for the coming of the day of better things: greater, because by so large a space of man's little life, so much nearer to the "austere unpitying grave."

CHARLES F. G. MASTERMAN.



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*"You will recall more clearly than I certain horrible, catastrophic, universal ruin passages in Revelation—monsters swallowing the Universe, blood and fire and clouds and an eternal crash, rotting ruin enveloping all things—will all come. There are perhaps ten million men dead of this war, and perhaps a hundred million persons to whom death would be a blessing. Add to these as many millions more whose views of life are so distorted that blank idiocy would be a better mental outlook, and you'll get a hint (and only a hint) of what this Continent has already become—a bankrupt slaughterhouse inhabited by unmated women. We have talked of 'problems' in our day. We never had a problem: for the worst task we ever saw was a mere blithe pastime compared with what these women and the few men that will remain here must face. The hills about Verdun are not blown to pieces worse than the whole social structure and intellectual and spiritual life of Europe. I wonder that anybody is sane."*

MR. PAGE, the AMERICAN AMBASSADOR in London  
to Mr. ALDERMEN in Hampton, Virginia. 1916.

## CHAPTER I

### THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

#### I

THE war is over, and in most of the victorious countries at least there is a feeling of relief that things are no worse. The catastrophe seemed so immense, the toll of life and treasure so terrible, the end so uncertain, that men looked to the close with the deepest foreboding. There was fear that this close would find all the nations so exhausted as to cause a general collapse of civilisation itself. Work and the impulse to work would cease. The demand for commodities would be unaccompanied by such reward as would excite supply. The very foundations of Society would vanish. Men would be found returning to the condition of a hungry mob, without hope or purpose, scrambling in the deepening darkness for the bare means of sustenance. And undoubtedly had it been possible for the war to continue for ten years instead of five, "this old Europe" would have perished in some such twilight of the gods. Peace came in time to save at least a portion of it. Bled white by the loss of the flower of the nation, oppressed by enormous indebtedness to foreign powers, and with profound disturbance in the minds of their surviving citizens, Britain and the Western nations are setting themselves to the re-establishment of such normal conditions as are possible after so great a calamity. In one the people are again cultivating the rich soil. In another the war itself has provided unexpected stimulus to production. In a third every workshop or factory is inundated with orders for its goods because it can pay its workers in

a debased currency. The shock has been severe, and a century may be required for recovery; but the structure endures.

There are forces, however, which that shock has set working, which will not be exhausted to-day or to-morrow, and which are well worth examination; for upon right understanding of them will depend the future peaceful development of the race. It is difficult, for example, rightly to estimate the effect upon the future of Britain of the gigantic migration which tore men from the fields or from town and office stool, and sent them out by millions beyond the sea to risk their lives in every corner of the world. In France each citizen had passed through the disturbing and unifying influence of the two years' conscription in times of peace. France had still close at hand the bitter memories of foreign invasion. And France was for the most part fighting during the war on the soil, and in defence of the soil, of its own sacred land. The French armies were also largely peasant armies, recruited from the owners of the soil and their children, accepting the necessity for the defence of their own fields and homes. But in Britain none of these conditions occurred. Men volunteered or were pressed into the armies and shipped over the sea in millions who otherwise would never have seen the sea or visited foreign lands or left their native town. They owned no piece of the land in which they fought. They had owned no portion of the land from which they had gone. They went out into the great adventure of all the world. They served in France and Italy, in Gallipoli and Salonica, in Egypt and Palestine and India and Mesopotamia, in the frosty Caucasus and the White Sea. And at the end they came home also in millions again, also without owning any piece of their own land, to take up the thread of life which had been so rudely snapped by service in a struggle they had always previously regarded as incredible. A friend of mine heard fragments of conversation between a bus conductor and a passenger, while the vehicle was held up by the passing of a regiment of Guards.

The conductor had fought through the war and become a Serjeant-Major: "But that's not to say that I liked it." In reply to some patriotic platitude he burst out fiercely: "I don't see that, it is my country. I don't own a thing in it."

Before they returned, the prevailing philosophy asserted that they would never return. A queer unrest would be laid on them by their experience. They would loathe and despise their old occupations. They would never settle down to weckly wage-earning in the orderly ennuï of man's ordinary peaceful day. They would never be found serving ribbons to ladies in drapers' establishments, following the plough in the bleak, lonely, winter fields, tending the machines in the vast factories, adding up other men's accounts in the cellars of great city offices by the aid of artificial light. But the period of possible upheaval has passed. All these prophecies have been dispelled. The great armies have melted away like snow in summer. The fierce interest of each of the majority was not contempt for his old job, but fear lest he should be done out of it. All the experience of incredible suffering, danger and upheaval in remote States and territories has vanished like a dream. The broken ends of normal life have joined together again, as though the interval had never been. And amid those now engaged in the selling of ribbons or the speeding of the plough or the minding of machines or the work of adding and copying other men's business, are men who once held the Ypres salient, or stormed through the Hindenburg line, or marched into Bulgaria or Bagdad, or bivouacked outside Jerusalem, or, in even more remote enterprise, somewhere "beyond the stormy Hebrides" had "visited the bottom of the monstrous world."

This return of men trained in the art of war to the pursuits of peace is perhaps, even more wonderful than the enlistment of untrained men of peace in the machine of war. It may be that the tranquillity is temporary only, the finding of a place of refuge from risk and discomfort, and the fear of an alternative ruin. The soldier who has

become a citizen in sedentary or low-paid occupation may be only in the position of the actual combatant on the battlefield who accepts the squalor of any temporary place of protection, so long as he is freed from immediate danger and the intolerable sound of the guns. He may yet, when the senses are partially restored, regain a consciousness of the inadequacy of his present position to the sacrifices which he made; and the promises of the rulers of his country that these sacrifices would be more than recompensed to him. But it is certain that the larger movements of social unrest amongst the workers in Britain were at the beginning fomented, not by or among the men who fought abroad, but by and among the men who stayed at home. It was the great centres of home industry which were exempted from the conscription who first agitated the nation with truculent demand for the betterment of their conditions. The railwaymen, the coal-miners, the dock-labourers, the workers in the munition cities such as Glasgow, were the leaders in this revolt. No prominent part in this revolt was taken by the travellers who had returned. They were mostly, as discharged soldiers and sailors, for the moment at least, returned to a world where they were very contented to find security and any place reserved for them at all; very content, indeed, to find themselves alive. Later there have been signs that this numbness is passing away, and passing away even now, not as the truculent demand of the returned hero, but because that hero has been shelled out of the lair which he thought secure by the coming of unemployment, as once he was shelled out of the dug-out by the enemy's guns.

At first men expected a visible destruction. One of my colleagues in the Cabinet, in those awful twelve days in which the world broke under our feet, asserted to me that if we went to war, within a fortnight every mill and factory would be closed in the north, and that hunger-maddened multitudes would sack every rich man's house and break into a kind of civil riot in their need for food. And indeed it seemed impossible that civilisation should

suddenly break up and crash to pieces without signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. Comets appeared to presage former calamities of far less magnitude. Here it would have seemed almost natural if the sun had been turned into darkness and the moon into blood. But no upheaval or protest of nature disturbed the amazing ways of humanity. Before a few months had passed the waging of war and the wholesale slaughter of man by man seemed to the average mind a thing incredible. After a few months had passed it seemed incredible that any other condition should obtain, and business became adjusted to war instead of to peace, with large profits. One day a white marble city is standing in magnificence and pride by the waters of a Southern sea, confident that it will never be moved at any time. The next it has been overwhelmed by volcano or earthquake, and is a scene of horror and desolation, with all who remain of its people crying aloud that God is dead. But turn a page in the chapter of time—flowers and growing things have caparisoned the wrecks of men's handiwork; children are playing among the ruins; all evidence of violence has gone; there is little remembrance, and still less regret, of what the city once was.

So was it with the experience of the European War. It was interesting to talk at the end with growing boys and girls who had forgotten the understandings of a now remote childhood, and had no picture in their minds of any condition of Society in which the world was *not* at war. Like the noise of the machines, in the testimony of the factory worker, which only become unendurable when they are silent; so humanity is still stunned, not by the noise, but by the silence, of the guns. In that great silence the whole story of those five years of uncertainty and madness appears but as a dream when one awaketh, or a tale that is told. You would think that the great magnitude of suffering and loss would alone charge the world of man's conscious experience henceforth with an atmosphere of irrevocable tragedy. But it is the property of pain that it is untransferable either in space or time. A man can be torn with



sympathy at the torture of a friend. He can never experience himself that torture, and by such experience either lighten the burden or share the agony of another. If but a fraction of the active torment or dull misery of the war combatants could have been transferred, not by the clumsy interpretation of picture, written or spoken word, but by some mind current affecting another's human sensation, lighting up in another mind the unassayable and uncommunicable direct apprehension of pain, the war would have come to an end in less weeks than it endured years.

Amidst all these millions who suffered, each individual suffered *alone*. And the same solitariness is characteristic also of the advance in time. One can remember with the acutest apprehension the torment of yesterday. But one cannot directly experience that torment. And as time hurries on, and new interests unfold, and the very fabric of the brain is changed, the whole thing becomes but an incident of the past, in which the dark and bright are intermingled, and it is doubtful which was most real. The very men who at one time were crying upon death to end their sufferings, whose minds were half shattered by intolerable fatigue and anxiety, who cursed with militant fury all those non-fighters at home who talked of the magnificence of war, in a few years' time are found to be telling tales to the younger generation from which the horror is gone and only the glory remains. The dead do not return. They are mourned at first with anguish of loss and longing that nothing can assuage. Men and women seek what consolation they can in the older faiths, or frantically attempt communication with the spirits of the fallen, or set themselves sternly, with stoic resolve, to carry out the duty of the day. But the primrose and the poppy are flinging their fragrance and colour over the vast, raw cemeteries of the unnumbered dead. Beauty and quiet are subduing rough edges and wearing down the first ugly and defiant challenge of mortality. And in remembrance as years go by, and those who have fallen first appear but a

little more hasty in journeying whither all must go, the sense of utter ruin and destruction becomes transferred into sentiment of acceptance and pride. And no protest or insistent demand for remembrance can come from that gigantic army of the dead. A new generation arises who have been taught to hold in special honour the memory of those 'who gave their lives for their country.'

It is this isolation of humanity, more than any of the deadly sins which scourge mankind, which is responsible for the periodic recurrence of war. At each successive catastrophe two statements are always made, and always afterwards disproved. The one is that this particular war has at last shown up the bankruptcy of the popular religion, which henceforth stands judged and condemned for inability to prevent it or active encouragement of it. So Christianity has been condemned to death after each periodic outbreak of men's fury. And so, after it is over, Christianity has continued to survive. And the second is that the actual experience by the soldier of the incredible misery and stupidity of it all, will make a repetition henceforth for ever impossible. In practice the actual reverse is true.

I was told by a picture seller that a hideous vision, called "The City of Fear," showing the Ypres salient in ultimate condition of destruction, was chiefly purchased by soldiers who had been in that salient themselves, no doubt in pride, to show their wives and children what exactly they had experienced.

Each war is made, by the older generations narrating to the younger the amazing sufferings they have endured. Napoleon the Little is put on the Imperial throne by the stories told by the veterans to the children in every village in France of the incredible hardships of the service of Napoleon the Great. The greater the misery, the greater the glory. These men survived it all. Their combats and sufferings become a legend stirring the hearts of youth, from the world of business and pleasure to embarking upon the creation of a similar epic.

Men say to-day that the new war methods possess none of the glamour of the old chivalrous adventure, and therefore they excite no similar enthusiasm. But they speak idle words. The fact that the form of war has changed will no more quench the "Sword's high irresistible song," than the change when that sword itself surrendered to the rifle and the bayonet, or the bayonet to the bomb. Indeed the "chivalry of the air" has brought back something of the spirit and noble temper of the combats of the Middle Ages. In fifty years time the heart of all generous and adventurous youth will be thrilled by the story of the landing at V. Beach at Gallipoli or the *ils ne passeront pas* of the defence of Verdun, or the record of the great air-fighters; and the mud heaps of Passchendaele and Ypres will be reckoned as "Holy Ground."

Each new generation listens with wondering approval to the narrative, not of the wisdom, but of the folly of the old. To-day any attempt to rekindle the conflict, under any conditions, for any cause, would be strangled at birth. Any statesman or Government which essayed a second war of conscripted soldiers would perish in the revolution which he would have created. The people would not only not fight against Bolshevik Russia, or for the imposition of territorial rearrangements in Europe, or against alleged insult or attack upon British interests or British honour. They would not even fight for causes for the defence of which, five years ago, the whole nation sprang to arms, for the most part with sentiments of high sacrifice. You could not raise a conscript army to retain India, or Egypt, if they "rebelled." You could not raise an army, except by bribery at enormous expense, to prevent Ireland becoming a Republic.

There has come partly the "disillusionment of war." "What were we all fighting for? What was there in it, after all, which could not have been settled without fighting? What have we really gained—especially what have the fighters really gained?" is the query of those who once marched off to the sounds of music. They ~~now tramp~~

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II

the streets in poverty while they observe the careless luxury and are informed of the vast fortunes made by the wise men who stayed at home. It is probable that the out-of-work German soldier and the out-of-work British soldier entertain to-day more kindly feelings to each other than either do to the *Scheiber* and profiteers of their own countries. Lashed into fury by the newspaper press, by tales of brutality in part untrue, they now find—certainly in "Armies of Occupation"—that the German soldier exhibits the same mixture of cowardice and courage, the same devotion to country, the same numbness in the cogs of the military machine, the same love of home and wife and children, as they themselves exhibited all through the noise of that infernal clang of the stupidities and ferocities of war. The whole thing has fallen to pieces like a child's doll's house. The result of its destruction was not in the least realised when we rejoiced deliriously over victory and the Armistice. It is only now being apprehended that both sides have lost, and only the one lost more heavily. The Devil was let loose in the world, and he is the only one who has harvested any gains. And the forces of malignancy, some blind or capricious power which turns the sight of men into darkness, and the reason of men into lunacy, are to-day dancing that "Devil's Dance" over the ruins of a world.

## II

There is not one good cause which can be said to have been enriched by the murderous operations of this war. The territorial delimitations of Europe have not been settled. They poise desperately on a Treaty of Versailles which has no friends, and which is rapidly being torn to fragments. The economic stability of Europe has not been settled. England imposes a huge indemnity on Germany, only to find that it has slashed its own prosperity in the process, and created two million unemployed. The spiritual life of Europe has not been enriched: there is more hatred

of nation and nation than before the war, more determination to find, sooner or later, revenges; more splitting asunder of a humanity grown fearful and bitter and old. Above all Fear—the meanest of the deadly sins—is dominant from the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic. Nor has the security of Europe been achieved. Man is only seeking instruments of destruction more far reaching and terrific than the rifle and the machine gun: hopefully looking forward to a time when a few litres of poison gas, sown over populous cities by an elusive aeroplane, may wipe out all the inhabitants of London or Paris or Berlin, as a child can wipe out an ant-heap or wasp's nest without any possible resistance from their inhabitants. Women have achieved equality with men. In the late war they suffered equally with men in the bombing and blasting of cities. They also worked equally with men providing the material of war. No power on earth can keep them out of any war that is to come. Callousness rather than tenderness has been the fruit of the struggle, so that no one really cares, and no Government is pressed to provide the necessary credit, when the three more terrible horses of the Apocalypse succeed the first; and famine and pestilence and madness supplement, on the grand scale, the actual good work of killing. After the white horse with the rider going forth conquering and to conquer, and the red horse with "power given to him that sat thereon to take away peace from the earth and that they should kill one another," and the black horse bearing one with a pair of balances weighing out rationed and famined food, came the climax of all: "*And I looked and behold a pale horse and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger and with death and with the beasts of the earth.*" That pale horse is riding triumphant through the Volga basin and among tens of millions. Who will set a boundary to his progress? Ten years ago relief, irrespective of political opinion or even of home scarcity, would have been rushed into

Russia with fifteen millions of men, women and children in jeopardy and two million dead. How many of the hundreds of thousands of decent men who are watching the football of a Saturday have ever entertained an idea of even putting pressure on their Government, or "let their little fingers ache" for such an incalculable load of misery? Armenians, for whose sufferings once Gladstone roused the country, perish in every variety of torture and violence, unparalleled since the Middle Age. A bloody guerilla warfare continues for nearly a year unchecked and almost unnoticed in Ireland. But the theatres and cinemas are crowded, and the wealthy are occupied in schemes for saving or increasing their riches, and each ex-Service man (the "hero" of three years ago) is terrified by the advancing cloud of unemployment, or involved in its cold mists, or making frantic efforts to escape from them. Politics have become more bitter and more corrupt. The struggle between Capital and Labour has become more fierce and uncompromising. The efforts of the Churches have become more futile and dim. The elaboration of moral effort outside the Churches has become a voice crying in the wilderness. The newspapers are filled with record of the struggle of one class against another class—consumers attacking retail tradesmen, retail tradesmen attacking the middle man, employers insisting on reduction of the wages of the employed, the employed insisting first on the reduction of the profits of the employers—everywhere confusion, uncertainty and some fear, combined in all classes which possess, with a passionate pursuit of the pleasure of the senses—the pleasure of a day. The structure of confidence and hope, in England as elsewhere, has collapsed under a strain too great for humanity to endure. Seven hundred thousand of the beauty and pride of Britain who might have changed the world a little for the better lie silent and cold amongst the "unanswering generations of the dead." Of the many of those that remain, the sense of duty and hard service has been shaken by the shaking of the solid ground, by the knowledge of how hazardous

and transitory is the life of man, and by the ever-present invitation: "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." Most of the thinking soldiers who have returned gaze at the spectacle with a kind of pathetic amazement. Gallipoli, Passchendaele, the Somme "grave," the fate of the Fifth Army, and all the inconceivable wretchedness and loss and misery associated with the Ypres "Salient" and its quarter of a million dead, seem to be utterly irreconcilable with the England of to-day. The poets are for the most part full of bitterness, and their verses the story of anger and betrayal rather than that of victory. The prose writers voice on occasions the feelings of many—perhaps the feelings of the dead.

"I would gladly share," writes one, "in the optimism of other soldiers of the war, for the man is to be envied who can still put his faith in the 'masses of Englishmen,' or find satisfaction in working for a League of Nations or League of Youth. The war has demonstrated in a manner most painful that human nature does not change; that fear and greed, its governing impulses, are ineradicable, and are fundamental conditions of existence. I agree with your correspondent that appealing is useless; but much of the 'doing' seems to be equally ineffective.

"The prospect of a League of Nations would be amusing if it were not a travesty of a cherished ideal; the wild beasts will be forming a League next, and requesting the lion and tiger to be joint presidents. And the League of Youth is an attempt to build on an ever-shifting foundation, for the youth of to-day is the enemy of the youth of to-morrow. The ideal does not commend itself. Surely it is possible for youth and age to reconcile their interests in life, and to heal the breach between them, instead of widening and perpetuating it? There is at least the hope that when we soldiers of the war grow older, we shall remember our youth sufficiently well (shall we ever forget?) to effect a temporary healing. I think that the hopes of all ex-soldiers, who hope at all, are centred in the Labour Party, and we watch with anxiety the coming struggle

## THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

between Labour and the 'tragic comedians' who now misgovern the British Isles.

"But the fate of those who have endeavoured to realise any great ideal, and they have usually been men to whom the idea of violence was abhorrent, fills us with despair. There is now a minority of intellectual people who fought for truth, some of whom suffered persecution and imprisonment, during the war; there has always been such a minority fighting for truth; there always will be, and they will pay for their efforts, and expiate the fact of their existence as Christ Himself and thousands of others have done. They are like the fly which endeavours to pass to freedom through a pane of glass, buzzing unheeded till it does, or till the people, irritated by the incessant noise, crush it beneath their finger. Theirs is a thankless and hopeless task. It will bring them happiness while they retain the illusion of its utility; but those of them who lose that illusion would have been more fortunate had they never been born."<sup>1</sup>

And all the time with their bodies "blown about the desert dust" or sunk in "the deep's untrampled floor" or "sealed within the iron hills" or gathered into great companies where the memory of each particular grave is gradually forgotten, the flower of the nations rests in silence—in silence, almost as it seems, watching and condemning the courses of the world for which in the pride of youth they had given all—so young.

### III

A great London newspaper recently sent out a representative into England to try to discover the "New World." He had somewhat the function of Noah's Dove; and, like Noah's Dove in the familiar hymn, he seemed to "flit between rough seas and stormy skies." He had fought in the war, and he desired to see what blessing the nation had received from it, and how far it had stimulated multi-

• • <sup>1</sup> "Another Soldier of the War" in *The Nation*.



furious good causes. The results of his efforts were not entirely encouraging. In the kingdom of the Spirit it is as if the war had never been : except perhaps that amongst definite post-war organisations the competition has become fiercer for extorting higher terms for "men who partook" in the great war. Idealism is indeed preached—by the same idealists. As in Anatole France's simile the squirrel revolving round its cage and feeling the cage move under him, calls it progress. The little societies which stand for international right, the prevention of future war, understanding between nation and nation, the re-establishment of human brotherhood, continue their efforts in dingy back rooms and with limited funds. Their members are the salt of the earth. But the earth refuses to be salted. The newspapers which preached sanity before the war continue to preach sanity after the war. But their circulation has not materially increased and their effect is negligible in comparison with the Press that has learnt and forgotten nothing in the five years of human torment. The "Man in the Street" remains to-day in the Street and of the Street. He has been scattered all over the world. He has seen, with the Psalmist of old, the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. He has endured unspeakable suffering and looked into the face of Death. Now he has returned—such is the verdict—and into the Street again. The painter who is desultorily redecorating your house, reveals in conversation that after the manner of men he has fought with beasts at Ephesus. The man who arrives suddenly on summons to repair your water supply announces on examination—and only after being questioned—that he was "gassed" in the Salient. The fisherman in a half-alive seacoast village will tell you how he served in a mine-sweeper off the coasts of "The 'Oly Land." A casual traveller in khaki encountered in the train informs you as a result of his experience in India as an army cook : "Natives ; they can't cook. Curries and that I grant you, but not what you would call proper cooking. I gave one some Yorkshire pudding to make, and what do you think he did

with it? Fried it! I don't believe there's such a thing as a really good kitchen through the length and breadth of India." That is the sole impression made upon a British voting citizen in contact with the oldest civilisation in the world and the most desperate of modern problems in its relation to our own.

Our people have gone out into this adventure in the most remarkable mental migration the world has ever seen—from Hoxton to Archangel, Wigan to Gallipoli, or Manchester to Bagdad. They have come back and the future has soldered up with the past, omitting the experience of that time as completely as if it were "the fierce vexation of a dream." Every one prophesied what "he" would do when "he" came home. Each prophet asserted that he would do exactly what the prophet desired that he should do. When "he" came home he had no wish to do anything except what he did when he went away—only perhaps a little more so. He will see football matches by hired performers, as before, only a little more of them. He will pack in twice the number of spectators at double the fee; he will attend mid-week matches as well as those on Saturday afternoons, and in such numbers as to cause consternation to the business men of great cities lest a cup-tie or an important League match be fixed in their district. In one northern town they computed that many tens of thousands of pounds were lost to trade and industry by such a disaster—a replayed cup-tie fixed on a full working day. He will work, and indeed be glad to find a "place" kept open for him, and he is working to the extent of many millions. But he is not going to damage himself with overwork, after his experience of war; and neither on time-work with special rates for overtime, nor on piece-work in which by extra effort he can earn extra wages, can he be cajoled to increase his income by unusual energy. For the rest, all the theatres succeed, so long as—and only so long as—they sink gradually into revue, the music halls flourish, *Charlie's Aunt*, *Peter Pan*, and *Chin-Chou* are performed for the five hundredth time.

Complaints against high prices and insufficient houses and demand for increased wages decide elections and exercise the minds of men. Outside these islands, Europe perishes, and plague and famine stalk through the nations. Meanwhile the Church preaches the need for the Christianisation of Japan in order to avert another war, Christians (on this comforting theory) never being likely to wage war with each other.

## IV

War does not breed ideals either during its duration or when it is over. It would appear that the sole result of each world catastrophe may be to produce material hunger, but in no respect moral change. It was after the forecast of a cosmic upheaval, when the stars of heaven had fallen like untimely fruit, and this had been followed by a New Heaven and a New Earth, that the author of the Apocalypse issued his strange challenge: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." That—according to this testimony—is the condition of England in the period succeeding the Great War.

One may, perhaps, agree with much of this diagnosis without accepting its pessimistic conclusions. The men who thought that ordinary folk could be frightened into resistance against war by fear of the consequences of any future conflict, were similar to those who in all ages have thought that people could be frightened into an austere morality by fear of unending torture. There were a few in each case to whom the appeal came home. In neither case was it a moral appeal, for no morality can be born from fear of punishment. The majority in the old days trod the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire because of ascetic preaching, or hopeful that at the last something would turn up to avert its application to them. And so the majority to-day have gone back to the only life they have ever known, and leave the ardent few to preach to an absent audience of the things which belong to their peace.

It is a good-tempered English crowd, after all, which has forgotten the tragedy of dead comrades and the misery of trench warfare, in the excitement of witnessing one team of hirelings beat another on a Saturday afternoon. It is a good-tempered English family that delights in the balcony in the rough humours of the music hall, or the ever-multiplying cinema, or the antics of Charlie, and prefers these to a "problem play." No race in the world has been so successful as the English in putting "realities" aside, and refusing to face facts which might paralyse action. And that was as true before the experience of the war as to-day. We have but reverted to type. "The French succeed in doing it," says a character in one of Mr. Galsworthy's early novels, "and the Russians: Why shouldn't we?" To which comes the reply of the true Briton: "What's right for the French and Russians is wrong for us. When we begin to be real we only really begin to be false. Isn't life bad enough already?" "There seemed," says the narrator, "a touching muddle in his optimism—a muddle of tenderness and of intolerance of truth, and second-handedness. Like the lion above him, he seemed to be defying Life to make him look at her." The British nation to-day, like that Trafalgar Square lion, is "defying Life to make it look at her." It is in the same position as an artisan who has struggled through some dangerous disease, or a City merchant who has had an operation for peritonitis. Such men are filled with queer thoughts as to the meaning of life, and the object of all their energies. "What have I been working for?" "What is the good of it all?" "Why, when it all brings me to this?" are the thoughts which run through the minds of the convalescent, and are even recorded in the testimony of the dead. But on recovery all such thoughts disappear. The one returns to his machine, the other to his merchandise: each to take up again life as he left it: the only life he has ever known. To-day the populace, seeking to forget, demand bread and games; other classes, money-making and accumulation of goods; others, dancing or music, or consultation with

wizards and spirits, or communion with the ghosts of the departed. The idealist gazes with wonder and sadness, the wise man with pity and understanding. For he knows, with Hamlet, that "man could be bounded in a nutshell and count himself a king of infinite space, were it not that he has bad dreams." And it is a sufficiently "bad dream" which has disturbed his thought in youth or age: a dream which will never leave him quite the same again.

## V

Lord Lansdowne—Toryism's historic leader and the very model of the well-meaning representatives of the landed aristocracy—can challenge those who still delight in war, and merely wish that Britain shall be stronger than its neighbours, with words of grave eloquence and warning. Writing in favour of the League of Nations, he declares:

"It is not, I think, too much to say that there is no other direction in which we can look for the accomplishment of the set purpose of the civilised world, which cannot afford—which is determined not to have—a repetition of the tragedy of 1914. This feeling grows deeper as the lesson of the last seven years eats its way into our understanding. We realise that the results of the war are revealed not only in the total of lives lost or wrecked, not only in the millions wasted on purposes of pure destruction, but on the ruin of the fabric of Society, the brutalisation of human character, the release of passions which refuse to be imprisoned, the arrestation of progress moral and material, and the handing over of vast areas, not only to disorder, but to pestilence and famine.

"While these things are happening, will anyone suggest that we shall sit down and prepare for a repetition of those events on a scale which cannot fail to be even more tremendous and heart-rending? Our people will not have it. They will not be content to admit that our statesmanship is bankrupt, that the principles of Christianity may be valuable for domestic application, but have no place in

international affairs; and they will look to their leaders to point the way out."

And indeed, to everything that is rational and humane, that looks beyond the outlook of an hour and sets itself to work for the days to come, such a League is the only antidote to madness and despair. Yet, while the "League of Nations Union" exists, and is run by passionate idealists, and holds great meetings, and has no reputable enemies, there is no general uprising in its defence or interest in its doings. The editor of a great newspaper told me that, in all his articles descriptive of the League's activity, he always had to put headlines, and if possible the first few sentences, without mention of the League. Otherwise he knew the article would go unread. Its very conception is (by the majority) damned with faint praise. Its action—when it can be galvanised to action—is subjected to bitter criticism, exactly similar to that of the action of each individual nation, when that decision is disliked by its critics. It had referred to it, for example, the arbitration of the boundaries to be drawn in Upper Silesia as demanded by the Treaty of Versailles. The Supreme Council had found the problem utterly insoluble: they were drifting towards war in the attempt to solve it: that was the reason, and the only reason, which compelled them to refer it to the League. It is not the easy problems, but the hard, almost insoluble ones, which the League will be forced to tackle. It made its award. This may have been a good award or a bad one. Under the conditions laid down in the Versailles Treaty, by which it was bound, the award could not be anything but something resembling the judgment of Solomon. It was compelled to cut the baby in two. The only question was of the line of severance. The line of severance upon which it decided happened to be disagreeable to most of the newspapers which had been the most ardent advocates of the League of Nations. At once a vast hubbub arose. Instead of the arbitration award (however unpleasant) being accepted, the arbitration—and indeed the arbitrators—were sub-

jected to merciless criticism. They had by severance killed the baby. They had rendered the future peace of Europe impracticable. They had given German towns, with unpronounceable names which no one had ever heard of, to Poland. They had put a higher under a lower civilisation. They had drawn territorial divisions across water pipes and factories and coal mines and electric wires. The sole result would be to make Upper Silesia a desert, filled with owls and ivy. There was more than a suspicion that the award had been influenced by the desires of one particular power—and so on.

For my part, I should refuse to discuss any such award, good or evil. If the very papers and parties who agree to refer the question of arbitration to the League are going to attack the award of the League, it is evident that the only result can be destruction of the League. And the destruction of the League leaves nothing to deliver us from the body of this death. Unless an arbitration of the League is loyally accepted as a *cause jugée*, beyond attack or criticism, there is no conceivable possibility of emerging from the welter of little warring nationalities into which the world is divided. This particular award may have been good or may have been bad; I have insufficient knowledge to tell. But even if it resulted, like the award of Solomon, in the destruction of the life of the baby, I should still blindly support it simply because it is the award of the League. In its next arbitration it might produce an award equally repugnant to those who now applaud. I should expect them to support it, despite their repugnance. This is the way and the only way that we can emerge from the present *impasse*. It is true that the bulk of the British citizens care no more for Upper Silesia than for the interior of the moon, and the bulk of so-called "educated" British citizens would have difficulty in finding it in a map. Yet to elevate a League of Nations for support, and then furiously attack it in its first attempt at action, is to cause that bulk to turn away and cease to interest themselves in its objects.

"Art Thou He that should, come, or look we for

another?" is the question submitted to the League by a tormented world. "Look we for another" is the lesson driven home by all who criticise the League Arbitration awards. But where will you look for that "other"? In the ever-shifting imitations of European alliances in which the State that fought with one yesterday fights against that one to-morrow? You will be looking at ghosts and phantoms. In the autocratic domination of the British Empire, or the British Empire with America included, imposing its will by the force of its might upon alien territories? You will merely unite all those alien territories into one common alliance against so intolerable an hegemony. In the creation of a world State? Perhaps at long last, when man has worked the brute out of him, and "let the ape and tiger die." But such a State will only come through a League of Nations, and by the laborious effort of centuries. It cannot be imposed upon a world which to-day resembles nothing so much as a sick-room, heavy with the fevers of war and the lust and fear of revenge. In universal disarmament? The progress of science has already effected national disarmament, in so far as it has rendered the weapons of war, which men are at present building, already hopelessly obsolescent. For in the years to come a couple of men, with a tube of gas, will be able to wipe out a Navy or an Army, as if these were wiped out with a sponge. Twist and turn as you will, you cannot get away from the fact that this is a moral question, lying independent of and behind all efforts at machinery. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you," must be the prayer of all the nations, if humanity is to be saved.

## VI

Meantime England has somehow to be interested in that League of Nations which, with however great difficulty, stands as the sole visible embodiment of the idea. It is not interested in the League. That is not because it is the League, but because of the interest. England is not



interested in anything at all. It cares nothing about local, municipal, or Parliamentary politics. It is like a sick man resting after a great outletting of blood. The body is emaciated. The nervous system is dead. It can only respond to the strongest of stimulus. Men and women move like phantoms in a dying world. The aristocracy has vanished, as all aristocracies vanish in prolonged war. War is both the opportunity, the object, and the destruction of aristocracies. For this cause are they brought into the world. The Middle Class is engaged in a struggle, and seemingly a losing one, for the bare maintenance of any semblance of its accepted standard of life. The workmen, the great body of England, had a good time, and successfully struck for higher wages during the months of plenty succeeding the war. They are having a bad time, and have unsuccessfully struck against reduction of wages in the months of penury which have followed. The interest of over six thousand millions of pounds is paid out annually to some, as the result of the taxation of all; those some spend it all, to the envy of all. Most of it represents profit made by the war, in period of national necessity. In face of these facts and emotions, England cares little for the League of Nations, and is indifferent to the recovery or the ruin of Europe. It possesses an instinct, handed down from generations of "islanders": not only that Europe is inhabited by an inferior race, but also that England is most happy and prosperous when Europe is left alone.

## VII

Yet experience has not left a blank without some result in memory. And although one is consistently astonished by the smallness of effect on men's minds of the most gigantic upheaval the world has ever seen, there is no doubt that, after the numbness has passed, such an extraordinary experience will operate in the lives of many. It will operate in two directions. The first is the direct contact

with Australians, Canadians, and Americans. These are surprisingly found to possess astonishing physical developments, an independence which the whole system of the British Army has discouraged, and a pride in great English-speaking races growing up beyond the oceans, in which every man, however poor, has a chance of decent life, denied in this little overcrowded island of cities.

The result may be a great emigration, stimulated by the fact that for the first time Canada or Australia have become real countries, instead of regions but dimly apprehended in snow or cloud ; inhabited by real men, proud of their own land.

And the second discovery is that the foreigners of Europe are not entirely indistinguishable from the tribes of ape and tiger, and that Europe itself does not exclusively consist of imbeciles inhabiting ruins.

"Beautiful places there is, foreign," observed a gardener of mine ; one of the Naval Division who had been into Belgium (while in the neighbourhood Belgian refugees alleviated days of boredom by devising fresh tortures for the Kaiser).

"This is a beautiful city. I think it is the most beautiful city I have ever seen. There are oranges growing on the trees and a cinema across the road. It is called Verona," wrote a country recruit to his home, blissfully oblivious of either Dante or Juliet, but apprehending after all, something of the matchless beauty of Italy for his own. ~~It is the land~~ and not only the people which provides a new discovery. And it is curious to find the British soldier as delighted with the vision of "Oranges growing on the trees" as Milton in his praise of where "the fruit with burnished rind hung amiable," which he placed in his description of Paradise, nearly three hundred years ago.

But the British soldier also made friends with courteous and brave Arabs in the East, with men and women of countries with outlandish names, and with the children of every race and speech and tongue. And this, perhaps, has been the one positive benefit of the aftermath of war.

*“I am far too much in doubt about the Present, far too perturbed about the Future, to be otherwise than profoundly reverential about the Past.”*

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.      6

## CHAPTER II

### THE PASSING OF FEUDALISM

#### I

AN aristocracy is nourished and maintained by a nation for one purpose only. It does not, as a whole, support Art, Science and Literature. These historically have been promoted by the merchant class—from the day when the glories of Venice were made possible by a mercantile oligarchy, or of Florence by a family of bankers, to the day when the painting of the pre-Raphaelites was supported by the merchants of Glasgow and Manchester. An aristocracy may buy pictures recognised as masters, or inherit pictures painted for mercantile ancestors, and in times of want sell them to the nation or to the merchant princes of America. I know of no case in which any aristocracy has substantially provided means for writers or painters to live, although it will subsidise with mean reward a Swift, a Johnson or a Burke whose works may achieve an earthly immortality. The solitary exception is in the case when it obtains—by chance, for of every thousand of them nine-tenths are worthless—a painter of genius to portray upon canvas its features or those of its children.

But the purpose for which it exists is the purpose of war. It is a class set apart in the days of peace, and magnificently maintained, that it may be of use when the day of trial comes. The British aristocracy was no exception: indeed it rivalled the German in being the only aristocracy which was performing such work efficiently. The French had perished or lay hidden and ineffective in the Faubourg

St. Germain, and other places, where cobwebs spread round men's minds. The Austrian had rotted through superstitions, in-breeding, and the gayness of Vienna. The Russian was both pleasure-seeking and incompetent. It could not even keep itself fit for its own special function of war, and when defeat caused revolution it was knocked on the head like a sheep too weak to bleat a protest. But the chivalry of the German Empire went out to war as in the old times, and, fortified by an elaborated and carefully trained apparatus of "intellectuals," was able for nearly five years to keep half the world at bay without one really decisive defeat. Our aristocracy had no such educated machine at its disposal, and was consequently handicapped in the day of Armageddon. But it possessed all the qualities for which it had been maintained, and showed them in shining splendour—courage, devotion, care for the men under its charge, character which kept together the lessening ranks, and put new life into the forlorn hope. It had justified its existence in the ultimate hour. "Remember," said an officer to embryo subalterns of the governing class, "that when the day of battle comes, you are in charge of twenty-five men, not twenty-six. What happens to yourself does not matter at all!" It perished in heroic struggle.

Aristocracies are indeed sorely tried in times of peace, and the British was no exception. It had to "keep fit." It had to find occupation for its idleness. It had to appear to justify a life in time of tranquillity, which ~~could only be~~ justified as a waiting for a time of upheaval. Thus, it was entrusted with the overlordship of most of the land of England, and often annoyed the inhabitants by assuming that this trust resembled the ownership of a dog's whip or a child's toy, whereas, of course, it was only entrusted from historic times with the control of British land on condition that it would protect the nation and lead its levies when war came. Its youth was taught a standard of "playing the game" at the public school, and the training of character rather than intellect. It ignored the latter and agree-

ably—without severe remonstrance—achieved the former. It passed through the life of early maturity at the Universities or in the more celebrated regiments of the British Army, for the most part occupying itself and taking a leadership in the traditional sports of England—fox-hunting, shooting, racing, and the more expensive pastimes on the one hand, football or cricket on the other. In the first, without competitors, it achieved success, and earned the gratitude of all the servile populations of the countryside. In the second, in open competition with the Middle Class and the mass of the plebeians, its triumph was not so sweeping; but the applause was all the greater from the servile population of the towns when in such impartial competition any one of its members attained success. It passed through the customary course of a young man's pleasure, engaging in dissipation common to all classes, on a scale adequate to its wealth, but not, probably, in greater proportion in magnitude than that of other classes. It married a child of its own class or an American, or an actress, and its class, except for the newly ennobled rich, was largely a family affair. And it settled down to enjoy the combined life of country and town. Its activities grew more challengeable with advancing years, for it sometimes got querulous, prejudiced, and with the strange belief that it was supporting the country instead of the country bearing the burden of its idleness. But it worked at administering the law Justice at Petty Sessions, and the local Government, and directed land agents concerning the administration of its estate, and supported Church Schools and all good clerical charities, and kept alive the Territorial Army. It filled the London "Season" with gladness in a round of balls and festivities and various social junketings. The children of the poor used to stand outside the big houses to see the pretty ladies alight and pass in. Its younger sons and brothers often entered the House of Commons, where good manners and good nature ensured the respect due to their station; and although often inarticulate, they were encouraged to speak. Others,

possessing peerages, "legislated" in the House of Lords, or rather listened to the speeches of clever lawyers who had been ennobled, and then trooped into the lobby to vote for their party. They were angry over the limitation of the House of Lords veto, and some said that their star had then set. But those who knew the condition of England better, realised that this had been a liberation rather than a fettering of their powers, and that by not itching to "interfere with matters which they do not understand," they had drawn the teeth of any enemy attack on them. In South England, at least, they commanded the votes of their tenants and all who were indifferent to the ardour of a Radicalism, with difficulty surviving, or only in the little Nonconformist chapels. And they were continually recruited from wealthy brewers, financiers, successful commercial men, newspaper proprietors and others, who settled down and bought country estates, and brought up their children to the same pleasant routine of sport, physical fitness, playing the game, and preparing for the practice (if not for the evil) of war.

The only criticism the historian of the future will make is that the art of war had passed beyond them, and the practice, without the art, meant inevitable destruction. So that, when war came, they led their followers gallantly to certain death in deeds, all of which would have deserved the Victoria Cross, if only the doers had survived. Towards the war's end, and when an enormous proportion of them had been killed, they found themselves fighting, perhaps, under a Chief of Staff who had risen from the plebeians, and amongst all kinds of "bookish" and studious Generals from humble parentage, Scotch Universities, or even quainter Commanders from the Dominions, who a few months before had been auctioneers or dealers in real estate. But on the whole the Cavalry Generals and the old army officers kept on top. And when Germany collapsed, "too fatigued" longer to fight a world in arms, these survivors of the aristocratic tradition could receive a just acclaim, as representative of "all the dead."

## II

There are books, some written privately, some published, which describe how these men met the terrific challenge of almost certain death. Among those who had entered the Army itself, and had dawdled away their time pig-sticking in India or polo-playing in South Africa, the thing came with a great sense of relief. If they did not woo darkness as it were a bride, they at least realised that all their life had been moulded for this hour, and many went into battle singing, without a trace of fear. They fought; if they were wounded, they returned as speedily as possible to the front; they allowed no health certificates to interfere with their ardour. Some knew with certainty that they would be killed, but cared nothing so long as they were facing the enemy. In the retreat from Mons and the first battle of Ypres perished the flower of the British aristocracy; "playing the game" to the last, as they had been taught to play it all through their days of boyhood. They earned the extraordinary devotion of their men, and you may say with confidence nine-tenths of them thought of their men first. They did not form part of the armics that won the war. These were of a totally different character and temper; patriotic, stubborn, but not natural lovers of battle. Their tradition was only carried on by the chivalry of the Air, where the boys from the public schools passed into the Air Service, in company indeed with boys of a very different class, with whom they would never have associated at home. In many acrodromes the average life of the individual was little more than a fortnight. In the useless slaughter of the Guards on the Somme, or of the Rifle Brigade in Hooge Wood, half the great families of England, heirs of large estates and wealth, perished without a cry. These boys, who had been brought up with a prospect before them of every good material thing that life can give, died without complaint, often through the bungling of Generals, in a foreign land. And the British aristocracy, perished, as they perished in the Wars of the



Roses, or in fighting for their King in the great Civil War, or as the Southern aristocracy in America, in courage and high effort, and an epic of heroic sacrifice, which will be remembered so long as England endures.

### III

There is taking place the greatest change which has ever occurred in the history of the land of England since the days of the Norman Conquest: with the possible exception of the gigantic robberies of the Reformation. It is being effected, not by direct confiscation, but by enormous taxation, which is destroying the whole Feudal system as it extended practically but little changed from 1066 to 1914. Until now the land-owning class has always been able to absorb the intruders which came in with great wealth to obtain the prestige and amenities which belonged to ownership of great estates. Thus, in the eighteenth century, England saw the "nabobs," who had plundered India, purchase or build great country houses, with acres which gave them possession of the tenants, the labourers, and of many seats in Parliament. Later came the wealth of the Sugar Islands. And then the big manufacturers and traders commenced to see how they could obtain enjoyment, bought titles, and renovated bankrupt estates, and passed from allegiance to Nonconformity into the broad bosom of the Church of England. A courageous attempt to shore up the old system was made by the American marriages, in which the daughters of transatlantic millionaires were married to the heirs or owners of historic titles; and the marriage *dots* provided for the maintenance of unproductive estates. Then came the sudden influx of the South African gold mines, which threw the balance on the other side. And you would find in the remote countryside, in historic houses containing chapels with the tombs of Crusaders, men "with names like Rhenish wines" entertaining queer companies of appropriate friends.

Yet this tough old English landed system swallowed

them all up, and compelled them to conform to its demands. In the second generation even the very names had been modified to those familiar in British rural life. The politics became Feudal, the religion State and Anglican, the attitude towards the tenants one of careless generosity, the attitude of the tenants one of respectful flattery, the attitude of the landless labourers one of acquiescence in an existence of semi-starvation in life sustained below the limits of decent existence, qualified by the flight of all the young men and women to the towns. In return for all the money spent on improvements and sport and non-economic rents (for practically all the estates in Southern England were supported by incomes derived from outside), all that villages and farmers were asked to do was to vote for the nominee of their owners at infrequent elections, local or national; and most of them were very content to make the exchange, counting an infrequent vote as but of little importance in comparison with social comfort and liberal repairs, and the remission of rent in hard times. The system might have continued until the last aged labourer had been borne to his rest, and no one was left to till and dig and harvest the produce. But, with the most patriotic support to the Government in the great challenge of 1914, the Feudal system vanished in blood and fire, and the landed classes were consumed.

For it is impossible to imagine, in the vast changes now taking place, that much which is left of the old landed system will be able to assimilate the new owners. I have been unable, from Government or private returns, to obtain exact figures of this amazing transformation. But I note that in one year one firm of auctioneers declare that they have disposed of the area of an English county. I note that sales are being announced every day in the newspapers, of an average of perhaps half a dozen of greater or lesser historic country houses, and of estates running into many thousands of acres.<sup>1</sup> And wherever I have visited, up and

<sup>1</sup> In one single page of the *Times* (I quote from the *Nation*) I find the following pieces of England offered for sale: Ingmire Hall, on a Northern Yorkshire border, castellated manor

down Southern England, I have come upon visible evidence of this transformation. The smaller squire, went first, almost unnoticed, and with only occasional bitter complaint at passing from the homes of their ancestors to the suburbs or dingy flats of London or the villas of the salubrious watering-places. Then came the outraged cry of the owners of large historic estates, proclaiming that with the burden of income-tax and super-tax, and the fall in the value of securities, and the rise in the price of all estate necessities, they also would be compelled to relinquish the gigantic castles and houses which had been the pride of the countryside for hundreds of years. Their property perished in battle, no less than their children. They are not yet conscious of what has happened. They believe, many of them, that by borrowings and economies for a few years, better times will come with a return to something like "normal" conditions. But there are no "normal" conditions possible for them, for at least their generation, if not for ever. Their method of life has vanished as completely as that of the French Nobility after the march of the Revolution. Some new families may be founded by some rich men. But the greater number of these houses will become as the Châteaux and Castles of the Loire or the Indre; Chambord, a monstrous dead skeleton all cold and empty where once feasted and revelled beautiful women and gallant men; Blois, where Guise was murdered; Chenonceaux, built over a river; Langeais, an unchanged mediæval fortress, a visiting place for tourists; Amboise, where once they drowned the Huguenots, now the home of a few old pensioners, supported by the charity of the Duc d'Orléans. Already the discussion has ceased to be academic. What use can the places be put to if no one can

house, early sixteenth century, 5000 acres; Slains Castle and Longhaven in Aberdeenshire, 7700 acres; Hawkstone in Shropshire, 1285 acres; Glenfinart in Argyllshire, 7356 acres; Hamilton, 30,744 acres; Llanarmon Towers, twenty-three farms; Claremont in Surrey, which Clive built, 502 acres; Holmes Lacy in Herefordshire, 343 acres; Crawfordton, Dumfriesshire, 3940 acres; Sudbourne Hall in Suffolk, 7650 acres; Oxford Castle in Suffolk, a large part of the village of Oxford and twenty farms; Colworth in Bedfordshire, 2300 acres; North Berwick estate in East Lothian, with ruins of Tantallon Castle, 2500 acres; Cassiobury Park, 370 acres, in Essex.

live in them: schools, centres for aerodromes, or convalescent homes for ex-soldiers or tuberculous children? Some of the smaller and less unwieldy are already turning into a kind of boarding-house, holding several families. One can even conceive of the adoption of methods which have frequently been put into force in other countries, and these gigantic castles being used as quarrying ground for constructing cottage homes for the poor. Half Rome and many of the great cities of Italy have been built literally from the stones of the buildings which were the glories of the Roman Empire. Such a fate—noble or ignoble—may await in these coming generations the historic houses of Britain.

There may be those who can rise to some sense of satisfaction, even at a transformation which has ejected them from the homes of their ancestors. After all, they have given property while others have given lives for the saving of England in a dark hour. They may feel pride in the thought that such houses may be used for beneficent purposes by the community long after they are dead, and neither destroyed nor put to some mean purpose. This is what they have "given" in the "Great War"—given, while other men have received increased wealth and emoluments by sharp contracts for munitions with a Government Department lax in cutting prices so long as the goods could be delivered speedily. The old generation passes with its children: the best of these children dead, the very type of its method of life, maintained for so long, vanished for ever.

Heine before his death confronted the future with dark forebodings, thinking it belonged to the Communists. "I can think only with fear and horror," he confessed, "of the time when these dark iconoclasts will have gained power. . . . They will tear from the soil of the social order the lilies that toil not nor spin, and are as wondrously arrayed as King Solomon in all his glory. . . . And my *Book of Songs* will be used by the grocer to make the little paper bags, with which he will wrap up coffee or snuff for

the old women of the future." At first he is filled with fury at the thought. Then reason prevails. "I cry aloud: 'It has been judged and condemned for long, the old social order, let it meet its due! Let it be destroyed, the old world, where cynicism flourished and man was exploited by man! Let them be utterly destroyed, the whited sepulchres where lies and injustice dwelt. And blessed be the grocer who one day will make paper bags of my poems, and will wrap up in them coffee and snuff for the poor, honest, old men who in our unjust world of to-day have perhaps to do without these pleasures.—*Fiat Justitia, pereat mundus.*'"

## IV

The first to go have been the "squireens," the owners of a few thousand acres, or the "gentlemen farmers," working perhaps a few hundreds. Theirs was a life of the open air, of "sport" in riding and hunting and shooting, of lavish hospitality and good fellowship, on the whole, with members of the same class. It was not a life which cultivated the arts and graces of literature and music, science and knowledge. It was not very much interested in the progress of the world. But in all these things there had been immense improvement, due in the main to better means of communication, since this class was described by famous writers in the early or even in the middle nineteenth century. The boys went to the lesser public schools, where most of them got dim visions of a culture which they themselves placidly rejected; and a considerable proportion to the old Universities, where they played games with great energy. One would have inherited the family estates, another entered a Line Regiment in the Army, a third wandered out into the British Dominions beyond the sea. There was often a family living, the local rectory or vicarage in which ultimately one of the less adventurous of the family would have found a safe haven of repose. Before the war there were even tentative efforts to get some of the more intelligent boys into "business"—a vague term

covering many things—in the City of London. No class was more intensely Conservative, with a bitterness to the pre-war Radical—the supporter, say, of Home Rule for Ireland, or Mr. Lloyd George's land campaign—only compatible with the hatred displayed to-day by the new rich to the "Bolshevik." No class was more intensely patriotic, if patriotism may be defined as love of one's country to the despising of all others—the patriotism of the Prussian Junker which, involving as it did willingness to sacrifice pleasure and even life itself for the sake of an impersonal ideal, is not lightly to be despised. And now it is going—or gone. A type of vigorous if limited civilisation is being torn out of the heart of England. One would like the certainty that these "Barbarians," of Matthew Arnold's famous description, will be replaced by any successors who will make more reputable the English countryside.

The second class—the great feudal families and the families which have entered feudalism by means of enormous fortunes—will on the whole probably offer a tougher resistance to the forces of disintegration. A considerable proportion of the enormous sales of land has been the sale by these owners of whole counties, either of one or two of many of the estates which they possess, retaining the central historic house and its surroundings; or the sale of outlying portions of some huge tracts of territory, leaving the central core intact. No one could claim that such a change is in any degree undesirable. The possession and overlordship of tracts of land situated in half a dozen counties, many of which the proprietor never saw from year to year, or perhaps had never seen at all, presented a Landed System unequalled in Europe for foolish waste. A certain famous peer came to consult his solicitor "about my property in Shropshire." "I did not know," said his legal adviser, "that you had any property in Shropshire." "Nor did I until yesterday," was the cheerful reply. And even on a consolidated estate, where you could walk twenty or thirty miles without leaving the land of one owner, there can be no harm done in lopping off a considerable proportion, hitherto inade-

quately "managed" by land agents drawn from the class of lesser landed proprietors, or a fraction of the time of the local solicitor.

But the "central core" of such an estate will probably survive. It is not now primarily concerned with rural matters at all. It is generally the property of men largely immersed in the business of politics or social life in London. The house is the centre of those week-end and other parties which Lord Salisbury (as we learn from his daughter's biography) used so heartily to hate, and which his nephew, Lord Balfour, used so heartily to enjoy. It is only a piece of Mayfair finding room to breathe: with golf or fishing or the dimmest walks round the estate provided for the ageing, and tennis and more reckless exercises for the younger members of a wealthy community. The greater the increase of locomotion, motor speed, wireless telephony, private cinema installations and the like, the more will these social amenities be prized. And even if the land outside the park railings lies dusty and untilled, and a great acreage of the countryside sinks back into a wilderness similar, say, to that of Southern Essex, those which possess amenities of climate and situation, names famous in history, and some special beauty or interest, will possibly for a century survive the corroding efforts of decay.

There is still an almost unlimited field of support possible in American marriages. The Canadians are crashing into the countryside with considerable violence. And there are always a certain if limited number of fortunes made not so much by manufacture as by the manipulation of manufactures, great newspapers and the like, whose owners desire to settle down in some habitation of once famous men, and from that centre, rather than from a London Square, found a family and, in any particular method natural to them, entertain their friends. In some, the very historic families themselves have rallied to the support of their old historical home, and having made money in various ways, resist alike the smashing taxation of the Government and the blandishment of the profiteer. Never-

theless the tide is rising against their continuance. The taxation of the very rich is certain steadily to increase as the workmen apprehend their increasing power and increasing miseries, and shift the burden from their shoulders. It is to these "very rich" that the agitator always turns, as he demonstrates to a bewildered and dissatisfied audience the enormous possessions in real estate as well as in business or manufacture, of those very few who own great wealth.

Beyond this partial confiscation by taxation, there is also the very real uncertainty as to whether the crowded town peoples of this tiny island will be able to maintain the same profit on export trade on which alone its wealth has been built up, and without which it will sink into ruin. That ruin will not be effected without Revolution. If the workman's standard is reduced substantially below the present, he will fight for the means for subsistence, however many hundreds of rich men assure him by facts and figures that orders cannot be obtained, or "Capital" flow into any particular industry, unless this reduction is made. He will be able himself to secure the legal forms on his side, for he can capture the House of Commons, which is omnipotent—though not yet. But it is quite possible that the wealthy families might organise armed resistance to legislation which they would regard as theft—would actually fight for the retaining of their land and possession, as, in history, other classes in similar predicament have fought for theirs.

Ruskin as a prophet told the landlords of England (whom he loved to call the squires of England) that the time would come when they would either have to fight for their land, or give up their land, and fight for their land, not through lawless seizure of it by armed mobs, but fight against legal seizure by the operations of the new enfranchised Parliament. He put the date at 1880. He was perhaps fifty or sixty years wrong, but fifty or sixty years is not a long time in the history of a nation.

We need not prophesy, however, any immediate spoliation. It is far more probable that the "squeeze" will continue in taxation as at present, almost silently, but



with occasional fierce or pathetic but entirely unheeded letters to the newspapers from some great nobleman, breaking the silence with a sudden cry.

## V

And if from these two great classes the land is passing, to whom, one may ask, is it going? In the main to one of three classes. There is, first, the War Profiteer, climbing upwards towards gentility, a title, and a seat in the House of Lords. There is, second, the tenant-farmer, buying up the house in which his ancestors had lived and the land which they had farmed for generations. And there is, third, the County Councils, Rural District Councils and other public bodies, who are purchasing land for various purposes, mainly, in specially favourable districts, for a closer settlement of smaller farmers upon the soil.

The War Profiteers will grow tired of the business, and throw it up; or they will use their country residences as a kind of adjunct or appendix to their city life; or their descendants will acquire something of the spirit of the Land System as it existed from the Norman Conquest to the battle of the Marne, and throw in their interests with the surviving ancient families. Some may attempt to "make the estate pay" or to "run things on a business footing." But the impossibility of rural England "paying" in face of world competition in staple products, especially cereals: the impossibility of obtaining either protection for rural products or bounties from the infuriated town dweller who numbers already 80 per cent. of the population: and the dead weight of passive resistance which will be offered by all concerned against brisk and up-to-date methods alien to every accepted tradition of the English countryside, will probably break any attempt to "run" a country estate on the methods of a city factory. For one brief moment the Wages Boards sent the remuneration of the agricultural labourers soaring beyond their wildest dreams, and it seemed possible that the younger

men might be induced to stay and make a career as working men with a living wage. But with the dissolving of these Boards, the wages have clattered down again, almost below subsistence level; and the attempt to put agriculture on a "business footing" will merely result in an increased migration into the great cities and the Dominions beyond the sea.

As to the sale to the tenants, at one time this seemed to be likely to be the normal course of change. Practically in every great estate the farmers were buying their farms almost at panic prices. Many of them are now loaded with heavy mortgages and regretting their purchase. A large number will collapse when bad seasons come; a still larger number when scientific competition is again renewed and the cities will be able to sell their manufactured articles in exchange for foreign food. But it cannot be sufficiently emphasised that this new rural civilisation which is replacing the system which has fallen into ruin is a farmer proprietorship and not a peasant proprietorship. Nothing is being created in the least degree like, for example, the social fabric of France, which has carried that magnificent and splendid land through all revolutions and invasions and will yet bring it safely out of present calamity. And that is the millions of free men, each owning his plot of ground, digging and sowing with incredible labour such as would astonish the average labourer in Britain, but with dignity, self-respect, and happiness in life, and deep love of their country, because they can eat of the fruit of their own labour, and are free. And everywhere in Europe you will find the land either cultivated in vast plains by serf labour working under great landlords, or (where the Revolution came) by peasants owning their own land. The experiment of a farmer proprietorship, employing landless labourers and with no landlords above them, has never yet been tried on a large scale. It appears to be the experiment which is likely to be tried next in this country.

England, it is said, is not fit for peasant cultivation. The statement, of course, is nonsense. Every country is

fit for a peasant cultivation, and everywhere, from Denmark to Bulgaria and the Volga to Finisterre, that peasant cultivation, in historic words, is turning sand into gold. The wealth of the rough, rude soil of Denmark—much of it worse than any soil found in England—has, in the indefatigable effort by which the Danish peasants, through labour on heaths and dunes, built up a prosperous agricultural civilisation, supporting one large town. And if the peasants of Jutland were given equivalent quantities of average English land, they would think themselves in Paradise. They may be more truthful who declare that Englishmen are not fit for a peasant civilisation, and who point to many private and Government experiments of the past few years which have ended in disastrous failure.

It is true that the "sea is the home of the English," and that their characteristic savour and instinct has always about it something of the salt tang and rhythm of the ocean in which this little island is embedded. So that the call of it reaches far up the rivers and over the encircling hills, and some of the counties which provide the greatest number of recruits for the "Royal Navy" are counties whose borders are remote from the "rocky shores" of the "triumphant sea" by which we are "bound in." It is true also that the *Wanderlust* is in the blood of most Englishmen, and if they cannot wander round the world, they can wander into the great adventure of the cities. But it is true also that the Revolution never crossed the Channel: that it was fought and repelled by a Landed Class which dominated England, who were engaged in all those years of warfare in expropriating the peasant from his holding and stealing "the con mon from the goose." It is but idle speculation to picture what the condition of England would be to-day if the Boulogne flotilla had safely sailed and landed its armies, or if the Nile, St. Vincent and Trafalgar had been disastrous defeats. But once Napoleon had established the Revolutionary system in England, it would probably have endured after Napoleon

fell; as it endured in Westphalia, for example, and the Confederation of the Rhine. Had this been accomplished, the greater part of England might now be in the hands of a network of peasant owners of from, say, three to twenty acres of land: with all the hedges vanished, and woods and coppices destroyed, and every corner of land utilised, and the great houses historic monuments rotting into decay. Whether this would have ultimately made for happiness and civilisation no one now could declare. With the peasant holder would have come the peasant school three generations before 1870, and we should be an educated as well as an independent race. It is as impossible to wish that such had happened, as to wish that Shakespeare had never been born. The land of Britain was protected from the Revolution not by the might of its armies, but by the resolute determination of its sea populations that a boundary should be set to the invader. And we cannot wish that their blood should be taken from the "breastplate of England," or that the epic of Nelson and his captains should be removed from that earthly immortality in which it for ever abides.

## VI

No one, I think, however, can be without some apprehension as to the future of this class of Farmer Proprietors. In special cultivations and in specially favourable conditions they may hold their own against the revival of competition—competition mainly from the Greater Britain of their own kith and kin. There will continue to be prosperity in the Fenland with its potatoes and vegetables, in the hops of Kent and Worcestershire (unless prohibition comes), in the fruit of the Vale of Evesham and the "Golden Valley." The richest grasslands of Britain may continue to produce the finest stock in the world. But I do not see how wheat, for example, can be successfully grown in England, when Canada commences once more to fill up with population on land which has scarcely been scratched; or how the three-course system can prevail when the bulk

of its products, by ever more elaborate mechanical contrivance, can be rushed from the farthest corners of the earth into the heart of the great English towns. It is rapidly becoming far easier and cheaper to feed, for example, London from across the Atlantic, than from the counties ten or twenty miles round its borders. And unless some great change takes place, which at present is not obvious, it seems inevitable that rural England is destined to become (in Kingsley's famous words) "the yard where the gentlemen play."

On the other hand, the great desire of the gentlemen to play, and the still existing assets in old houses and convertible week-end cottages and woods and great gardens and in places an almost aching loveliness, will probably prevent that "yard," except in the least attractive portions of it, from sinking into an uncultivated desert. The very advance of mechanical invention which is rendering our competition with imported food impossible, is also rendering it daily easier and more convenient for the "gentlemen" to get farther and farther out into that "yard." The death of a rural civilisation may be accompanied by a scattering of the city civilisation. "England" will consist of the cities and the men who run in and out of them every day. Let us hope that the pleasures and health which that "yard" can still give will not be confined to the "gentlemen" who play.

Yet it is impossible to believe that, if the Dominions as their population rises—as it is destined to rise by millions—still hold together in that amazing combination of nations which is misnamed the British Empire, England will be allowed to perish neglected. Macaulay's New Zealander is not destined to gaze forlornly upon the broken arches of London Bridge. The world centre of finance seems obviously destined to pass across the Atlantic, and already a ruined Europe can see no hope of recovery except through the intervention of America. Lancashire may be largely destroyed by the manufactures of the East; coal may become increasingly expensive to work, or be faced

with impossibly low prices from the great coal-fields of China and other rivals, or be largely replaced by oil or some totally different source of power. The sea supremacy, which has been built up through generations, will be the last to go. We shall build ships for other nations and continue in large degree to maintain the carrying trade of the world.

But even if the bulk of our export trade gradually disappears and the population is steadily reduced by birth control on the one hand and migration on the other, I do not think that we shall ever come to fulfil Mr. Bernard Shaw's prophecy of an England of lodging-house keepers and trained guides pointing out to visiting crowds the sites of the places where Shakespeare lived or Gladstone died. Geographical position no less than the prestige of a magnificent past, to which only Rome can present a parallel, will probably make England the centre of all the common interests of the great English-speaking Continents which are allied now together. The vision of the heart of Empire being transferred to Victoria, on the Eastern Pacific, in Mr. Jebb's brilliant book, is a vision which I think will never be realised. London is nearer to Canada than Washington to California; and the solid rock and ground of England will remain as a centre and seat of Government even if the Europe so near to it, yet so infinitely remote, sinks back into the twilight which followed the fall of Rome. I can imagine a country full of the pleasantness of a tranquil existence, capable of breeding and rearing a race of *samurai* devoted to the welfare of the world—a world which is shrinking so rapidly, that pretty soon we shall be talking daily to the remoter quarters of it, or transported bodily to them in less time than it takes to-day to get from Edinburgh to London.

I am talking of changes which seem remote; but scientific discovery is advancing with amazing rapidity. And it is good to be able to think that this "Royal Throne of Kings" will still be habitable by our great-grandchildren. But the question is really one of moral progress. There is

no limit to what may be done by our scientists and inventors. But how far can we guarantee that the prophets will not again prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means and the people love to have it so? In which case nothing will remain but dust and ashes; and the memory, amongst the "survivors of the ruins," of a time when men did splendid and noble things, in a community which once believed in God.

## VII

What has become, it may be asked, of those who have thus been dispossessed of their ancient possessions, and have passed from the places which many knew and loved in inheritance from unnumbered generations? Some are still endeavouring to live the life they have always known. I know of a case where the great house having been bought by a profiteer from Tooting, the ladies who once owned it are living in the lodge at the gate; being reluctant to cut themselves entirely apart from their old home. I know of others in which the family which has been compelled to sell the central mansion has occupied one of its own farm-houses, and carries on upon a limited scale a kind of existence which once it maintained without fear of any catastrophe breaking its life to pieces. A majority, I suppose, have swept into the great towns, and especially into London. The money obtained by the sale of their land enables them still to give their boys a Public School education, with the hope of a possibly succeeding University experience; although, in the commonest acceptance of this collapse in fortune, the children are being taken away earlier and competing with the products of the new secondary schools in those mysterious sources of wealth which are already overcrowded—electrical engineering, business enterprise, or "something in the City." Others have emigrated to seaside watering-places, in which they have occupied villas with a garden where the children can obtain tennis in the holidays, or play for the local cricket club and they themselves pass their time in grumblingly peregrinating round

indifferent golf courses, with hearts bitter against the change which has befallen them. They still maintain something of the pride of their class and race, and something of the arrogance toward the middle and lower classes which has ever been a fundamental note of feudalism. This arrogance, which was once offensive, is now pitiable, for in many of these places the local tradesman could buy them up without material damage to his own fortune, and the local profiteer "bounds" amid sycophantic praise, as he scatters his riches to almost any applicants for public or private subscriptions.

It is a mournful ending to a great tradition. For the majority one can see no opportunity of recovery. They are too old to learn any money-making trade, and their title or honour only obtains them some mean salary as "guinea-pig" directors on Companies whose managers make no secret of the contempt they hold for their intelligence. Their children may wander into the dominions beyond the sea, or the more intelligent of them rehabilitate the family fortune after a public school or University career. But it is to be feared that the Public School which has been the special preserve of feudalism has learnt little and forgotten little from all the experiences of War; and that, in these great institutions, the new profiteers who desire their children to be made gentlemen, are destined to squeeze out the descendants of a forlorn and bankrupt feudal system.



*"Behold, human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den. They have been here from their childhood and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move and can only see before them ; for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them turning round their heads. Above and behind them the light of a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way. And you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way ; like a screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets."*

*"I see."*

*"And do you see," I said, "men passing along the wall, some apparently talking and others silent, carrying vessels and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall?"*

*"You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners."*

*"Like ourselves," I replied.*

*"And they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?"*

*"True," he said, "how could they see anything but the shadows, if they were never allowed to move their heads?"*

PLATO, *Republic*, Book VIII.  
(Jowett's Translation.)

## CHAPTER III

### THE FLIGHT OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

It may be well briefly to record the nature of that strange suburban life which developed through the long peace of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It formed whole cities of a definite type and character. The idea of progress, if they even thought of progress, was that other similar cities would be built on adjacent sites of favourable access to the town. They might find slightly larger gardens, perhaps with a tennis-court instead of without. Whist drives might develop into auction bridge—although that carried with its name a flavour of darc-devil and gambling: the sort of game that was played by Mrs. Asquith and the reckless rich. But never in their wildest moments did they conceive that the whole suburban existence might break up and disappear. The war caused them to be astonished and bewildered; but the after-war changes are making them astonished and dismayed.

#### I

Let us examine the life of Richford, a London suburb, with tens of thousands of human beings living there, all having assembled to make a type of collective life unknown before the great material prosperity of the Victorian era. Richford is not a city or an illusion or a dream. It is a civilisation, or, rather, a piece of a civilisation, artificially delimited by the caprice of men who draw boundaries between one similar street and another. And when it speaks, that civilisation speaks, just as similar instruments, tuned to

a similar pitch, will give out the same note whenever tested. All the streets are the same. All the little villas with front and back gardens are the same. The furniture and the cultivation outside are the same. And the same also the mental furniture and cultivation, alike in the residence and the front and back gardens of the mind. All the pleasant, affable little men and women who live there have the same manner of life, the same attitude towards life, the same combined cowardice and courage in contact with life, the same fundamental refusal to face life itself. You can imagine breaking off a chunk of Richford just as you break off a chunk of a wasp's nest or honeycomb when the bees or wasps have gone. You can imagine that fragment being exhibited for the curiosity of some wondering new race two thousand years hence, just as the little cells and dwelling-places of Pompeii are exhibited to-day to the astonishment of observers, two thousand years after their burial. And you can imagine a collection carefully acquired by some expert of the future, also two thousand years hence, to reveal the kingdom of the mind of those who once populated these symmetrical streets. Here was the station which took them away by the railway in the morning, and brought them back at night. Here were the shops where they bought similar products, manufactured in bulk on a pattern; to eat, to drink, to wear, to display on the walls and floors of their houses, and to enclose them in the end in the standard, polished, brass-handled coffins in which to await the Day of Judgment. Here, again, would be specimens of the Town Hall in which their civic life was carried on; a life in which they took little interest or pride. And here the drinking fountain or clock tower; commemorating Queen Victoria, or good King Edward, or some local speculative builder who had become Mayor and developed the town; or the men who had made great fortunes in the Great War; or the men who had fallen in the Great War, without making any fortunes at all. And here would be the schools for their children, rising like towers out of the maze of two-storied buildings which formed their homes. And the places of

jumbled architecture almost indistinguishable in design, and even in opinion, in which under the titles of various religious bodies, they worshipped, or acquiesced in the worship of, the gods of their fathers. On the one side would be a park, in which, their worship completed, they strolled on Sundays, their one day of leisure, through avenues arranged with shrubs and appropriate flowers. And here, on other evenings, their children played games suitable to the season, until the hour arrived when they, too, commenced to journey by the railway backwards and forwards, in and out of Richford, for the remainder of their lives.

This for forty-eight or fifty weeks of the year. You may have, as a separate exhibit, the place to which they went when they were free in the remaining period: a Clacton or a Margate, which was, in effect, a Richford by the sea, where they stayed in the same little houses, in the same little streets, and gazed at the same shops selling the same standard goods; where they read the same newspapers, and listened to the same musical selections, and looked at the sea, tamed abroad, as all the rest of their lives they looked upon such nature as the speculative builder had left near Richford, tamed at home.

But for the railway, with its many commodious stations, each representing a slightly increasing grade of respectability, because slightly less remote from its birth at the hands of the same speculative builder, Richford would never have existed at all. And but for that Free Trade in commerce and industry which made London the centre where all the accounts of the world were kept, and the shipping and banking and exchange transactions of the world effected, no Richfords would ever have existed at all. This is not to vindicate Free Trade. It is to explain Richford. Every morning that terrific progeny of Free Trade, the City of London, sucks in from all the Richfords overcrowded trainloads, hurrying rapidly one after the other, of respectably and dingily garbed human beings. They spread themselves in that labyrinth from attic to underground cellar, with nimbleness and apparently with-

out repugnance, to spend the best of their days in copying other men's letters, adding up other men's accounts, or distributing, in vast numbers, in written or printed instructions, the requests and demands of other men for the alteration of universes which they have never known. Every evening they trample their way back again to Richford. And the evening and morning are one day. They are all either clerks in banks or shipping companies, or accountants, or insurance officials. And they are all rearing children to be insurance officials, or accountants, or clerks in banks or shipping companies.

There are fifty or a hundred churches in that same City of London, most of them built by Christopher Wren on the sites of former churches consumed in the Great Fire. Their spires and domes flash upwards, pointing to the planets or the fixed stars: with the legend which Paul found at Athens, marked as if graven upon them: "To an Unknown God."

It is not in the churches of the City nor in any market-place or exchange that the itinerant visitors from Richford find corporate expression of opinion. Their period of articulate speech is the time spent between their place of work and place of sleep. And also in the midday interval, when they crowd into underground eating-houses and play dominoes or discuss the affairs of the world, after a limited lunch. At these times the public opinion of the Richfords becomes vocal, and they denounce the Government and denounce the Labour leaders, and the more vigorous of them denounce both. And just as at one time they thought that Lloyd George was the limit, and at another time that the Kaiser was the limit, and at another, when the *Daily Mail* denounced Kitchener, that the *Daily Mail* was the limit, and that later Smillie (whose name they pronounced to rhyme with chilly) was the limit, so now they find a deeper grade of turpitude in the organised processions of the Unemployed and their leaders, as the limit, and think there may have been some good in "Smilly" after all. Also they denounce the Bolsheviki as the limit, whom

they read about in their favourite newspapers, and in the speeches of Mr. Winston Churchill, having a dim idea that the ideals of life of Richford and of Moscow have some incompatibility one with the other.

What would happen if the nerve-cord of the railway were suddenly severed remains conjectural. What would happen if London no more provided payment, however inadequate, for bank clerks and accountants and insurance officials, remains still more conjectural. Richford can make nothing with its hands. It has no capacity for sustained thought. It takes its opinions from the newspapers and journals which gain success in its service, and its opinion and the work of the editors of these spirited publications act and react the one against the other, each mildly inflaming the other. So that Richford, all unconsciously, helps to make the verdict of these newspapers, and the writers of these newspapers help to make the verdict of Richford. Its chief aim has been to abolish the old elements which confuse and trouble human life, especially the three disturbing elements of the Lucretian philosophy—the doings of kings, the passion of love, the nature of the gods. It is willing to settle down, making no extravagant demands on the universe, if only the universe will let it live at peace. If it can escape the earthquake, the pestilence and the fire, and just jog on through life tilling its allotments—*il faut cultiver son jardin*—it is willing to pay the price of abandonment of all life's difficult achievement; the large unrest which carries men to the heights and depths, the wonder and experience of the mysteries of life and death, and the amazing ways of men. It only asks that this compact may be observed by any unseen and now but dimly apprehended Ruler of human destiny. And it will gladly fulfil its half of the bargain, drifting through man's allotted threescore years and ten, with revolt and high ecstasy alike rejected, and raising up children, themselves to drift through a similar universe of security and routine, so long as "safety" is assured.

Any particular Richford is from time to time challenged by a Parliamentary election, and men and women appear

in its streets telling incredible stories of kingdoms remote and alien; of what has been happening in Poland or in Ireland; of huge tides and tempests which are tormenting humanity. Richford listens—such is the universal testimony—with respect, and not without curiosity, to these tangled tales. But Richford in the main, as in past similar challenges, is concerned with none of these things. It is true that it has been through the experience of the Great War, when its young men volunteered almost *en masse*, and fought magnificently; and their sisters, for the first time, went to work instead of their brothers by the same railway, in the cellars and attics of the City of London, and greatly enjoyed the experience. And their fathers and mothers laboured on the land and in gardens to produce food, and were consumed day and night with a great anxiety. It is true, also, if the old symbols of massacre were revived, that there is not one of these little tree-lined streets of bow-windowed houses which would not reveal the red cross of sacrifice. It is true, also, that from some far-off region from which the war was produced, discomfort is now produced, and an appalling rise in prices provokes as much astonishment and alarm as the continual rise of the ocean must have astonished and alarmed primitive people, in the ancient deluges of the world in which they were all destroyed.

But faced with the challenge, the great bulk of Richford passes back from the argument of the moment, and even from the experience of the moment, to the slow built-up convictions of a lifetime. Richford hates and despises the working classes, as all Richfords hate and despise the working classes. Richford hates and despises them, partly because it has contempt of them, and partly because it has fear of them. It has established its standard of a civilisation, modest in demand, indeed, in face of life's possibilities, but very tenacious in its maintenance of its home and garden, its clean street, and decent clothing, and agreeable manners and ways. Just on its borders, and always prepared seemingly to engulf it, are those great masses of humanity which

accept none of its standards, and maintain life on a totally different plane. Its apprehension and disgust are similar to that which occurs in all such conflicts of ideals among populations adjacent to each other; between the white and the negro in the Southern States of America, or even between the white and yellow and black in the Eastern Archipelagoes. Labour only enters its kingdom as a coal supply rendered ever more limited and expensive by the insatiable demand of coal-miners to work short hours for immense wages; or as the increase of its necessary season-ticket to "town" owing to the demand of the railway workers for higher pay; or as the plumber, who is unable to mend its jerry-built houses; or the bricklayer who refuses to build any alternatives. It can walk but a few yards and it is in, say, Hoxditch, where all the inhabitants are dingy and all the houses drab and overcrowded with swarms of discoloured children: and the public-houses flare at every corner: and it realises that this is the "Labour" against which it is warned by all the supporters of things as they are. In such case, although it has damned the Government and damned Labour alike, the appeal of Government against Labour can destroy among the majority the appeal of Labour against Government. For it is chiefly opposed to Government when that Government is "truckling" to Labour. Labour represents for it literally the figure of the Bolshevik of the cartoons, an unwashed, ill-dressed, truculent immigrant from the neighbouring Labour cities; tearing up the tree-avenues of its streets, trampling on its flower-beds, thrusting its clumsy feet through the bow-windows and aspidistra of its front drawing-rooms. In face of such a vision, it falls back on the protection of Government with something of the same spirit as the Psalmists of old, in their uncertain praise of a possibly angry God; proclaiming hopefully, if doubtfully: "We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." For Government, at worst, protects the hutch, the kennel, and the safe feeding-ground; and life is a hazardous and difficult business outside.



## II

Richford will never break its allegiance to the powers above in order to unite with the powers below. Even in perishing, it will still wave the old banner of Anti-Labour, and still be wishful to provide volunteers to "blackleg" every Tram or Railway or Coal or Municipal Strike. It will die with a better doctor, be encased in a more costly coffin, and deposited in a more respectable grave. But a movement has arisen, equally hostile to and contemptuous of "working men," in which it sees a last desperate hope of survival. This is a movement which terms itself "Anti-Waste." It is as "respectable" as the support even of the Government itself. Millionaires weeping over their vanishing millions, owners of great newspapers whose dividends are provided by Richford readers to the extent of tens of thousands a year, ex-Colonels and Admirals, men who bear the true Richford hall-mark of distinction and can damn the laziness and greed of the poor in the true Richford sentiment, have thus collected together into a political party to appeal to all the Richfords for support. It promises the cutting down of rates and taxes, the reduction of prices to get Richford back to the condition of hazardous bliss in which it basked in pre-war days. It will have no nonsense about forcing Richford to contribute to the health of the poor or the education of the poor. "We must cut our coat according to our cloth," is its convincing epigram in these matters. It produces a strange variety of Parliamentary candidates, with diverse claims to distinction or notoriety, for the allegiance of Richford; and a strange variety of orators, each with a diverse party to support them. By such "anti-wasters" the Government is, as it were, attacked in the rear, and so, for the first time in history, Richford turning against its historic allegiance. And although it counters the attack by putting up candidates who denounce and repudiate such a Government, and announce themselves more "anti-waste" than

the "anti-wasters," it undoubtedly eyes with alarm this new strange phenomenon of a rebellious Richford. Richford itself is not quite certain about it all; for it finds the process of "anti-waste" in practice, discharging from Government offices the girls and subsidiary and temporary Civil Servants whose employment during the war alone enabled it to maintain its standard. And it is not entirely convinced that some waste does not spill over into Richford and would be withdrawn if "anti-waste" triumphed. It is not quite convinced that a vigorously enforced "anti-waste" standard would not jeopardise its own future. But in its bewilderment it will probably rally round the new movement, which, if properly organised, should have a hectic run in all the Richfords of England. For the motto of Richford to-day is as that of the lepers of old in the siege of Samaria: "Why sit we here until we die? . . . Come and let us fall into the host of the Syrians . . . and if they kill us, we shall but die."

The dense mass of suburbia, having segregated into its own cities, and there created its own civilisation, has no complete parallel outside Britain. We scarcely appreciate its number. It is enough to say (for illustration) that, although London is the greatest city of manual workers in the world, if you analyse the divisions of the Parliamentary or County Council representation, you will find that if the Middle Class always voted one way—always against the manual workers—the Middle Class would always outvote the manual workers, and consequently could always maintain a majority, for example, on the London County Councils. And in Parliament more than one-sixth of the members—more, that is, than the total from Scotland and thrice as many as from Wales—are returned by London or that Greater London of the swarming suburbs where life possesses the special "note" of these high-spirited but now distracted people.

It is interesting and a little pathetic to trace the influence of the war and a rise in prices in the slow disintegration and decay of this whole standard of civilisation of

Middle-Class England. That civilisation had been built up in the belief that a sudden doubling of prices<sup>1</sup> was as unlikely to occur during its lifetime as the opening of a volcano in the middle of its streets. Before the war it was living a little beyond its income, in that stretching forward to more elaborate social life which, according to the orthodox economists, is the motive power of all "progress." It was enabled to do this largely because it had taken the control of its birth-rate in its own hands, and, despite the warnings and admonitions of high dignitaries of orthodox faiths, was rigorously limiting the number of its children. But then it had at least something substantial to reckon with. Now it finds itself, like a shipwrecked voyager, tossed about on unfathomable seas. It is true that in most cases its income has been increased, and in many others "our trade" and "our business" cheers it up with a substantial Christmas bonus. But in no case do these at all adequately compensate for the rise in cost of living. In all cases the value of savings has been cut to between a half to a third of their former total; and in a vast number of cases, especially of the old, living on pensions or small savings or cottage property, a more than doubled expense has to be met with no increase of income at all.

The efforts of those who still maintain the civilised standard of pre-war times are tremendous, and yet the general impression is that of a whole body of decent citizens slipping down by inexorable God-made or man-made or devil-made laws into the Abyss: as if a table was suddenly tilted slanting and all the little dolls and marionettes were sent sliding on to the floor. Some cling wildly to the edges, some get their feet into crooks and crannies and retain their hold for a moment; but in bulk the whole mass, despite resistance, is falling through the bottom of its world.

In general examination I find that the first thing which goes is the nurse or general servant, and the mother becomes

<sup>1</sup> A Government paper issued in March 1922 on the effect of prices on the Middle Class affirms that, although there has been a great fall in the working-class index numbers, those of the Middle Class still stand practically double what they stood before the war.

the drudge of the family. Next the small savings have vanished. Then the villa takes in a gentleman lodger: the breadwinner spends less on food: farinaceous foods—cereals, lentils and the like—replace meat and more palatable diets. The bulwark against food collapse is, in a large number of cases, the garden or allotment, tilled with assiduity, in hope of the Archbishop of Canterbury's continued approval, even extending to post-war days, in the hours normally devoted to the worship of God. Then comes the abandonment of all "paying" pleasures—the cinema, the theatre and the like—the abandonment of holidays, and the scraping together of oddments, etc., into clothes, with the willing acceptance (in contrast to previous proud rejection) of gifts of second-hand apparel from relations and friends. Finally comes (and only the soul of the suburbs can conceive what that means) "the abandonment of all effort to keep up appearances," the vanishing of entertainments and the little sociabilities, the mere naked struggle to provide food and a decent shelter for husband, wife and family. The children are all taken from school earlier, and sent out into business, and the arrival of a new baby is no longer an inconvenience: it is a disaster.

### III

A great London newspaper opened its columns to a symposium on the question of how the "new poor" were encountering post-war conditions. The replies were of extraordinary interest, but from the nature of the competition, they were for the most part optimistic in the sense that those replying were still carrying on the struggle, keeping the flag flying, while those who did not participate were those who had gone under with the flag trailed in the dust. The evidence of the old is most pitiful, for the young can still hope for better times. Thus one oldish couple, beyond work, are living on the sale of cottage property, for which they find a welcome demand. But the number of their cottages is limited, and "we hope we shall die,"

they declare, "before the proceeds of the last cottage are gone."

"How we manage," is the reply of another, "is largely question of 'doing without.'" "Arithmetic" is the solution of a third. "If your husband's earnings are £350 and you are spending £400 on food and clothes, your husband cannot save you from insolvency. Some will say: 'But we couldn't possibly live meaner,' and to these I would reply: 'If your meanest exceeds your means, you must!'" Here is the confession of an assistant master of a Secondary School, member of a noble profession, ignobly said. "Rubber shoes affixed to all our footwear." (Rubber on shoes appears everywhere a godsend to the Middle Classes.) "My wife goes 'sticking.' That saves the expense of firewood. Our holidays are generally imaginary. That saves, too. My wife gets bargains at emment sales, and the rhubarb in the garden does yeoman service. Also my wife murders her eyes with sewing, sewing, sewing. Saving is out of the question. Meantime," asserts this defiant fighter, "I pin my faith to *The Daily News*, Lord Robert Cecil and my own indomitable soul."

One has found temporary salvation in the reception of paying guests. Of another: "In 1914 my salary was £250 with a wife and three children; to-day it is £300 with a wife and five children. My wife has given up all idea of clothes beyond the absolutely necessary. We cannot any longer give presents."

"One good tailor-made garment a year for myself; all other things needed I make myself, together with my husband's shirts and socks, also reversing his ties when they look worn," is another explanation. It is the good stock—the best stock in Europe—that is thus shaken with adversity and is refusing to produce any more. Here is a family of seven with a salary of about £200 (less than the Municipal mudsweeper) where "all the children have obtained school scholarships. One (with a scholarship) is at College, another with a scholarship at University courses, kept going by the substitution of pulse food for flesh food

and keeping all half-worn articles, the whole boiled down into the unpalatable region of stiffening the upper lip and to do without." England will not be the gainer if a similar family in the future is limited to one, or entirely disappears.

In another case relief is obtained by the husband "giving up half his smokes; by walks to the beginnings of the penny stage on the tramway; by selling any old article, carpet, oilcloth or furniture not wanted." "Our initial capital was therefore," says another somewhat sadly, "money, household goods and clothing, energy. Money was spent long ago on necessities and a few labour-saving devices; we cannot draw on the second any longer, as repairs and renewals are insistent; and the balance of the energy is waning. What of the future?"

Many of these seemingly well-dressed appear but as whitened sepulchres. "Artifice," confesses that the wearing of boots instead of shoes hides over-darned socks; donning two waistcoats does away with undervests; old stocking legs with the feet cut off depute for pants. In Europe professors and scientists of world-wide reputation stalk through the streets of once brilliant capitals clothed in aged green frock-coats and trousers, with nothing beneath but an eating hunger. Practically on the whole of the Continent, east of the Rhine, caught between the profiteer and the demand of manual labour, the *intellegenzia* have been crushed to the wall. Only in Soviet Russia has any attempt been made to keep them alive. In England the process has been slower, but none the less sure.

"I reduced the number of meals," said 'Bonallié,' "and at first missing a customary meal induces a sharp craving; but from the beginning I noticed a distinct increase of comfort an hour or two later." "Eating meat once instead of four times a day improved digestion." So we learn the lesson of doing without, and in doing so mount to the stars. Our science, our education, our teaching of learning and piety is henceforth to be conducted under buoyant economies.

Labour savers, merciless elimination of all superfluities

in houses, clothes or diet; vacuum cleaners, the rubber shoes, the American stove; "meatless dinner, and a hay box;" "we never go to the cinema or theatre;" these run like a thread through these queer confessions: the good gifts which God has given to save a perishing race. Husband, professional man: "Wife and one child; taught the child myself until seven and a half, then sent her to the Council Schools. Do without any help. Do all washing. Never go to any place of amusement unless a village entertainment 'in aid of——' Shall manage to keep smiling. We are growing older; times seem getting harder. Still,"—the suburban ideal unconquerable—"have the satisfaction of not being regarded as poor people by our many acquaintances."

"The chief factor in the management of my household," bluntly begins one, "is that my wife works one hundred and twelve hours a week." No nonsense here about the eight-hour day of the Washington Labour Conference!

This is the headmaster of a County Secondary School (it may be noticed that it is from the clergymen, the Elementary and Secondary School teachers, the scientists and lecturers, and all those whose work is essential to the preaching of an ideal or the giving of wisdom to a new generation, that most of these confessions come): when the rising tide of forces threatened to engulf him: "I resigned from the clubs and societies to which I was attached, shut off every luxury except my pipe, and went on short commons." He cultivated his garden, got an allotment, used up old clothes instead of buying new ones; there is no maid, the washing is done at home; children's boots are passed down from one to another when they become inconveniently tight. "I mend my own boots and some of the children's, buying second-hand army boots." In the intervals of such occupation and the cultivation of an allotment, this citizen inspires the growing youth of England with intellectual interest, patriotism, reverence for the cultivation of mind and spirit. And so is such service rewarded.

You may multiply these confessions indefinitely. There is a dismal similarity about them. "The maid has gone long since," says "Aurelius." "A charwoman one day a week is hired, and all the washing is done at home. I clean the boots and wash up before nine o'clock office. I wash up after midday dinner. I mend most of the boots and shoes, and cut the boys' hair. A few hens help us with eggs and an occasional pot. We are exhausting our stock of clothing, linen, china, cutlery, etc., and what renewals we make are of the cheapest possible. Holidays are confined to home and country walks. Food, always plain, is still plain; but now, sometimes, not enough—not enough milk, butter and fruit. I neither smoke nor drink intoxicants. The landlord gets no more rent. Friends have sent cast-off clothing for the children. I fell ill, and was done, but a brother gave me £50 and saved me. I reckon that I am shrewd and am a good man of business—and I am managing, yes, managing to get a little more behind every month. The increase of salary I am told I am abundantly worth may come—any time."

The majority of these are paid on less than the standards of skilled labour: a considerable proportion below the standard of the unskilled. "A family of ten," "middle-class people," and "living in the style of educated folk," endure now by aid of the Council Schools and scholarships at the Secondary Schools. "No hireling doubles our care or halves our joys by high wages or extravagance," is the triumphant boast. All laundry is done at home. All garments last longer. The cheapest shopping district is discovered—not always where the poorest live. The American stove for warmth, a diet mainly of porridge and good puddings enable these to exist "on a small income and doing without vanities," of £350 a year. Again and again the allotment (a war product not yet demobilised), the American stove, the rubber-soled boots, washing done at home and dresses dyed—come in to save the desperate situation.

"Little repairs we do, if at all possible." "Things we



gave away before, we must wear now." One "saves his season ticket by cycling to town, wearing old coat and hat, presentable clothes being kept at the office." One courageous family "camp out for holiday in bell tents." "Art" buys food and roughs it at his office, boiling water in a bully tin on the gas stove. "Happily," is the confession, "there are no little ones." "I think it will be impossible for some of us to keep going at all," is the less buoyant confession of another, "for it is one continual struggle against prices rising as they do. My husband has worked at his firm for years, but they forget to raise the wages according to the cost of living. It makes one feel desperate at times." "The real reason why we, and others similarly situated," is the outburst of another, "can continue to live and keep smiling, is that we are gradually using up our reserve of clothes, house linen, etc. Renewal or renovation of furniture is out of the question. When these reserves have totally disappeared, our little savings—put by, when money was more valuable, for a rainy day—will disappear too, unless prices have come down or salaries gone up by that time. If they have not, we, as a class, will have disappeared too." Many are advertising for a family with children just older than their own, from whom to buy cast-off clothes.

"With all luxuries gone, food still costs more than it did. To balance these increases, I reduced the cost of clothes, holidays and amusements," says "Resourceful." Fixing rubber soles to shoes, making corsets with old bones, making embroidered lingerie, so occupy "Resourceful's" time that "concerts and theatres are almost crowded out." "We have cleared our mind of all nonsense about appearance," is the confession of two University graduates—one a woman councillor—who find in "country walks, visits to museums and picture galleries, and lentils and beans, instead of meat and bacon, substitutes for the pleasures prohibited by the present prices."

"Subletting every room except two in an old-fashioned roomy house," enables another pair "just to carry on,"

although "of course we have no children, and are compelled to hope that there will be none yet awhile, for the situation would indeed be desperate." The effect of "just carrying on," since 1914 is described by another as having meant "constant personal effort of wife and self, resulting in grave fatigue." "We are young, strong and determined to keep smiling," declares Mr. Art. E. Fiss (surely walking straight out of one of Mr. H. G. Wells' novels), "but I do not think either of us could keep up this double life indefinitely."

A fleet of pleasure motors pass them every Sunday morning while they are grubbing in their allotments for the rhubarb that does such yeoman service. Each newspaper reveals a more sensational musical comedy success, houses with entertainment tax and expensive seats crowded, with clothing which becomes ever more expensive in proportion to its ever more sensational scantiness. They are mocked by advertisements of huge elaborate drapery sales, of the doings of a Society seemingly careless of everything but luxurious waste; of winter sports and a fortnight on the Riviera, and gay Scarborough and giddy Blackpool. In two half-yearly lumps the Government pays out interest on over six thousand million pounds, owned by the men who stayed at home while the war was won. Some of their own kith and kin were thought to have assisted in that winning—now lying in half-forgotten graves; but now the six thousand millions are on their backs. And of such a Providential ordering of the world: "Yet have men praised thee," they can but assert: "Seeing that He has made men thus, and He doeth right."

#### IV

Yet they testify on the whole to unconquerable human aspiration. They are protected from complete collapse by the stability of rent. Just as in the older days they triumphantly painted their homes as "Acacia Villa," or "Beaconsfield House," "Chatsworth," "The Nook," or "The Glen," so now, in signing confessions of a struggle

which seems to many of them a losing one—in any case an immense fatigue—they sign themselves as “Optimist,” “Nil Desperandum,” “Madre Allegra,” “Esperanza,” or “The Sunshine Girl.” They are all looking to better times when the pressure will be removed, not most of them to Lord Robert Cecil, the *Daily News* and their own indomitable souls, but to some reverse of Fate, when the Government, or Providence, or some large secular change will put them back into the old position from which they never desired to be moved.

But entirely outside Suburbia lies an additional Middle Class—the *bourgeoisie*—of the Continental Socialist definition, which equally has no claim to association with the wealthy and titled on the one hand, and equally repudiates any association with the working classes below. It includes at its heart and kernel the “professional” classes—the doctors, ministers of religion, men and women whose lives are devoted to teaching and research and scientific discovery. It includes also the Civil Servants, and the retired Civil Servants who were guaranteed all their lives a certain support in old age, and are now receiving, through the depreciation of the pound note, less than half the real payment they expected. It includes all those who have saved a little, and are living on their savings: whose “safe” gilt-edged securities, owing to the war borrowings, have depreciated far below their former value, the missing portion having gone to pay for the war. In fact it is these, and not the big capitalists, who really paid for the war. It includes the writers of books and the journalists, most hardly hit of all; the shopkeepers, managers of other men’s shops, and all that litter of curious life which clings about the processes of retail trade. Everywhere in Europe it is perishing—in Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, even amongst the victors in Paris and Rome. It is the class which maintains any intellectual life, although intellectual interests do not absorb the energies of most of it. It is the class in which the old Puritan religion still dominates. Of our best novelists the late Henry James may go for subjects to the family of

indefinite wealth, of American origin, and Mr. Hardy can find the heights and depths of human life among his Dorsetshire peasants. But the most influential of contemporary writers, Mr. Bennett, for example, and Mr. H. G. Wells, never go far outside the realm of this large and spacious company of the Middle Class.

Indeed, our "old nobility" are not much more than the Middle Class who have become successful and made money, and bought land and a title, and in the second or third generation settled down comfortably as descendants of a long line of remote and reserved ancestors. A knight-hood is chucked to a successful actor, and a baronetcy (rarely) to a successful author. You will find these are children of the Middle Class. And it is this Middle Class—John Bull, less stout and complacent—which everywhere, from the clergyman or Civil Servant or medical man at the top to the small shopkeeper or the clerk in his own particular city at the other end of the scale, is being harassed out of existence by the financial after-consequences of the war.

The Governments of Europe are "run by" professors and journalists. The Governments of England have long been run by lawyers and a few wealthy families, who are influenced by and modify their policy in accordance with the wishes of a small group of newspaper proprietors, who hire the journalists to represent the views they wish from day to day to present to the public. You would think that these European Governments of professors and journalists would take every precaution possible to protect the *intelligenza* from extinction. Yet the evidence of all Europe is that this particular class, the class which makes ideas and diffuses knowledge, is the class which is perishing of hunger and cold. The British Government of nobles and lawyers have never had so strong an impulse. The one side will buy up a Jonathan Swift or a Samuel Johnson to voice their ideals in language understandable by the groundlings. The other will import an Edmund Burke from Ireland, who for many years, and until confronted by a Revolu-

ion representing something bigger than he can understand, will remain faithful to the creed of his party. But the lawyers and nobles with their later additions of as yet unennobled profiteers, have never seen much value in the assistance of an *intelligenza*, or any reason to waste money in its support. So the *intelligenza* which is interested in public life now largely goes to Labour and identifies itself passionately with Labour ideals: to be received, however, with far more distrust and much less welcome than if it had retained its position "in its own class," or found some other outlet for its energy.

And the result to-day is that, through the combination of smashing taxation more inimical to their standard of life than that imposed on any other class, with a rise in prices which has more than doubled their expenses, and a fall in securities which has nearly halved their capital, they are probably more bitterly deserted in this unseen combat of economic standard than any other class of the community. Occasionally a successful writer, such as Mr. Hugh Walpole, makes a protest against a condition in which it is impossible for a young man of genius or even of talent to obtain adequate opportunity for expressing his ideas. The newspapers discuss it for a few days, and then pass on to other interests, leaving the protest ineffectual and the reality unchanged.

Six years ago a family of two adults and three or four children, in the professional classes, could live a not undurable existence on some eight hundred to a thousand pounds a year. Insurance and even saving was possible; modest comfort in a decent house; the entertainment of guests; and, above all, education of the children in those lesser public schools and perhaps in the Universities, which were the gateway of the learned professions. The post-war world has smashed these standards like a rock falling; and the thousand a year of pre-war income is now worth an actual value nearer four than five hundred. Out of this the State takes great bites in income-tax, and the Municipality in rates. The schools to which his children are sent

continually demand a higher fee, while at the University, where he hoped his son to manage with perhaps £100 a year and a scholarship, he now finds £250 or £300—more than a quarter of his total income—to be the minimum. He looks round in desperation for redress, but he can see no light anywhere. He tries to sell his little pre-war capital and finds his "safe" Consols, which he bought at £100 or over, only obtaining a difficult purchaser at £50 or £60. He endeavours to move into a smaller house, but no smaller houses are to be acquired, and none are being built except at altogether prohibitive rents. He is in the clutch of the great machine—a post-war victim of the war.

But the bulk of the professional classes, even before the war, were not living at the rate of £1000 a year. And although Government imposts are slightly tempered to their now wretched plight, they remain in a state of "genteel poverty," almost more distressing than the naked struggle for existence in slums or back dwellings.

If any Government indeed had attempted, for any purpose whatever, before the war, to extract the difference of 1922 prices from those of 1914 out of the pockets of the consumer, it could only have done it by Revolution and actual fighting in the streets. The Middle Class gazed on this terrible increase with a rising despair. They could do nothing to remedy it. They felt like rats caught in a trap. They demanded—when they could—higher salaries, and received occasional increases and bonuses. But these increases went only a very small way towards meeting the strain which was laid upon them, and the general demand for retrenchment has practically caused them to cease. Their only alternative was to "do without." They are tightening up their belts to face a semi-starvation of their standard of life. They cannot make their grievances manifest, for they have no direct representatives or organised public opinion. They write letters to their papers describing their miserable condition. But no one takes much notice of the "New Poor." All the tradition of their standard of behaviour is against adopting the methods of

the artisan and labourer, which they regard as essentially "ungenteel"—the agitation, the public meeting, the complaint in public, the strike. One of the strongest elements in their character was a harmless vanity of display. They liked to make an appearance of possessing a little more wealth than they owned. They would send their children to a little too expensive school. They would pay rent for a little too expensive house. They spent a little too much on little ostentations and pleasures. The appearance of poverty or even of strict saving was regarded almost as a crime. And now that the poverty is real, and cannot be concealed, they are still partly bound by that tradition of reticence. They starve in silence. They think it more dignified so to do. They have been far more hardly hit than the working man by the immense increase of prices. For they have had a standard which involved a more complete necessity of weekly or daily repair. They spent more on clothes and boots and house-room and a servant; they spent much, above all, on their children's education. But clothes and boots are at prohibitive prices. They have had to give up servants for two good reasons: they have no money to pay them, and there are no servants to be had. They have to pay for the increasing cost of their children's schools by further limitations on their own necessities and pleasures, and by spending what little money they had accumulated for old age. And these little accumulations, having been mostly placed in "safe" securities of fixed interest, are now found to be worth only, perhaps, one-half of their former values. They have been very patient, but their patience is well-nigh exhausted. Whenever an opportunity is given to them of expressing an opinion they vote against the Government. They spend their leisure in cursing the working man and cursing the profiteer.

Here, then, is a complete and startling transformation of values; not slowly changing from one to another, but suddenly and almost brutally forced upon the life of millions by causes altogether outside their own control. They

work as hard, their desires are as modest, their tempers are as docile, their wish to please their employers is as great as before the war. They have not suddenly become, through the war, haughty and restless, or any less efficient from defacement of intelligence or character, than they were five years ago. But misfortune has come upon them as if deflected by unknown malignant powers, like the four winds, which, in conformity with the request of Satan, destroyed the prosperity of the blameless Patriarch Job. They cannot understand the meaning of this evil. They struggle, but no help comes. They cry aloud and none regardeth.

Before the war one could roughly estimate the position arranged in order of incomes of the middle and working class as something like the following table :

1. Better-paid professional men (doctors, lawyers, etc.), managers of business, better-paid shopkeepers.
2. Better-paid clerks, accountants, insurance agents, etc.
3. Lower-paid professional classes — clergy, school-masters, pensioners, etc.
4. Skilled labourers and artisans, engineers, coal-hewers, locomotive drivers, etc.
5. Lower-paid clerks, small shopkeepers.
6. Lower-paid unskilled labourers—railwaymen, dust-men, etc.

Compare with this the hierarchy of the same classes as it exists to-day :

1. Better-paid professional men, managers, shopkeepers.
2. Skilled labourers and artisans, engineers, coal-hewers, locomotive drivers, etc.
3. Better-paid clerks, with technical skill.
4. Lower-paid professional classes.
5. Lower-paid unskilled labourers, railwaymen, dust-men, etc.
6. Lower-paid clerks, agents, small shopkeepers.
7. Lowest-paid professional men—clergymen, school-masters, Civil Servants, War and Civil Service pensioners.

This table will show what a complete upset has occurred



in the very structure of society. The Municipality pays its scavengers and street cleaners substantially higher salaries than it pays to its elementary school teachers. No unskilled Trade Unionist would be allowed for a day to accept the salary of an average clergyman or minister of religion. In the great newspaper offices, the linotype compositor who prints the paper can afford to despise the income of the journalist who writes the paper. The general decrease in the real income of the Middle Class has been accompanied by such a complete substitution of another class as to make the double indignity even harder to endure. "I go in the gallery to the cinema," said a country doctor's wife. "My charwoman goes in the stalls."

Nor must the considerations be neglected of the present psychological condition of those of this class who have returned from the war. A far larger proportion of the Middle Class had direct experience of that war than any other section of the community. At the beginning they were the class who most readily volunteered. At the end they were the class most easily dispensed with. They offered none of the passive resistance to "dilution" which caused continual unrest in the Labour world. They went in mass. They fought magnificently. They lost heavily. But most of them have returned. They have returned new men. The London clerks formed some of the best fighting regiments of the world. They learnt in that enterprise a self-confidence, a pride and an energy which they had hitherto not recognised. These returned soldiers from the Middle Class are not going to be crushed between the millstones of defiant profiteering and defiant Labour. They are not going to acquiesce in the present lowering of the standard of their conditions. They may struggle against that lowering. They may fail. They will not accept their failure. They will disappear. The individual will seek another world for his ambitions. The class itself, for lack of recruitment, may perish in a generation.

The mind of the Middle-Class citizen has been mainly

turned to antipathy towards these emerging groups of workmen. His newspapers and the various charlatans who are endeavouring to exploit his miseries in their own interest find here a ready object lesson. In all previous days his endeavour has been to identify himself with those above him, whom he serves with gladness and for whose greater wealth he has no envious longings. His disdain and hatred have been reserved for those below him. He has hated the continuous rise in rates and taxes to give everything free to the working man for which he himself has had to pay. He believes that this working man is a lazy, incompetent, drunken, thoughtless figure, who begets unlimited children without providing for them, "strikes" for wages which he does not honestly earn at the slightest provocation, and spends in liquor the money that might provide him with savings for old age. And these conditions of the "working men" are not only emptying the Middle-Class pocket, but are causing the Middle Class infinite inconvenience and discomfort. The working man has a railway strike, and the Middle Class—an innocent victim in the quarrel—has to walk to work through rain and cold, catching influenza and pneumonia in the process. The working man in the coal-mines is idle, and the Middle Class at the end of a winter day contemplates a fireless home. He has readily believed, hitherto, that the increase of prices and most of the miseries of his condition are due to this insatiable combination of idleness and greed. It would be well if there were signs that he is awakening to a wider outlook. But he seems to have little anger, even against the wealthy profiteer. That profiteer not only amasses his ill-gotten gains. He flaunts these in the open street, in full vision of the despairing Middle Class. He (or generally she) is swaggering in all the luxury shops, ordering elaborate clothes and furniture and food, while the Middle Class in the corner is hurriedly endeavouring to pick up a remnant of cloth or a scrap of cheap nourishment. He is at gigantic motor shows competing ostentatiously for cars of a thousand or two thousand pounds apiece. The Middle

Class reads of the splendour of such displays, as he contemplates ruefully the renewal of his third-class ticket at double the old rate. On occasional visits to theatres, where he is now driven to pit or gallery, the Middle-Class citizen contemplates them encamped in stalls or balcony. He sees them filling great hotels, occupying all the restaurants, slopping their money about carelessly, and spending in a day what would have given him months of modest pleasure. Meantime there is no remission of his taxation. The price of his necessities refuses to go down to the old standards. He is recruited by such embittered elements as the thousands of demobilised officers who have been promoted and distinguished by energy and gallantry in defending their country, and now find that this country has no further use for their services. From the lairs in which these men are hiding, too proud to show their poverty, they contemplate the non-fighting profiteer, offering such display of reckless and luxurious expenditure as the world has rarely seen. Yet they take it all "lying down." For the profiteer has only to mention "Bolshevik" and the Middle Class scurries off to its dilapidated home. "They know how to deal with These People in America," affirmed a commercial traveller in a railway carriage. "No trials There. They just—Disappear."

How has this tragic condition been brought about? And why is he so helpless in facing proposals for the betterment of his condition? His position before the war was precarious. During the war it was one of anxious suspense. Since the war it has become impossible. He has been silent under his burdens. He has been silent partly because he thought himself to be in a tunnel which would assuredly have an end in open daylight. He is nothing if not patriotic. He tightened his belt, or spent his savings, or reduced to a nicety the art of "going without." He believed that he was thus doing "his bit" to secure victory and peace. And he has been silent also because he is by nature inarticulate. He possesses no power of combination. His thoughts and great anxieties had been

in the main with the war oversea. Most of all, he realised the foredoomed failure of any attempt to "strike" by those who live in small homes in the suburbs of cities, with houses on lease, and a standard of comfort which, if overthrown, might never again be restored.

I have said that no class felt so bitterly the burden of the war. The only possible exception may be those engaged in casual employment and the very poor. The skilled artisan received increased wages, not perhaps adequate to the increased cost of living. He managed in general to maintain his standard by overtime work, and by too excessive strain on the human machine. And the skilled artisan emerged from the war far better organised than ever before. He was evidently the strongest element in the State. He could in practice enforce his demands. The community outside, through its politicians and newspapers, treated him like an animal of uncertain temper, calling him "good dog," persuading him to wag his tail and hide his teeth, while endeavouring to ascertain with how little of the communal cake he could be reduced to docility and obedience. Below, amongst the unskilled workers, war pensions, unemployment pay, and the actual drainage of men into the Army prevented the ultimate grip of privation. This stage, indeed, only lasted while there was an immense boom in trade. Directly that boom collapsed, the Government and the private employer flung themselves on the newly acquired wage standard and beat it down. But the vanquished could always put up a fight in a series of rearguard actions, and only sullenly retreated. They maintained their organisations; they dealt with ingredients, like coal, essential to the life of the community. And if ever the world market is re-established, and there is any profit going, they will return again in their organised forces to scoop the bulk of that profit. There is thus no finality in the war for division of booty between "Capital" and the organised skilled artisan. The tide rolls backward and forward; and wrangles about "index numbers" of a standard of life are vocal in all the papers. The "capitalist"

is really afraid of what is called "organised labour." He cares no more about the bleats and whinings of Middle-Class organisations than he does about the dog on his doorstep.

So the Middle Class has been "getting it" all through. It presents no demands of a "Triple Alliance." It cannot "hold up" industry. It only dimly realises that a breaking point must come, and that breaking point is very near.

It lives in the Protectionist's Paradise: and yet it is not happy. By all the laws of such a Paradise, its high prices should receive compensation in high wages. It receives bonuses at times, but these are far indeed from compensations adequate to maintain its standard to that achieved with difficulty up to 1914. A huge mass of partially skilled women's labour, "trained" in innumerable Government Departments, and being systematically thrown out of work by Government Committees lashed by the cry of Anti-Waste, is already willing to take its place if it were to throw up its work in despair.

The Middle Class, like Issachar of old, is crouching down between two burdens. The one is the demand of the proletariat. The other is the demand of the profiteer. Behind these two is the unsatiable demand of the tax-collector for money, to be sunk in the sands of Assyria, or for the re-establishment of the Jews in Palestine, or the building of "Super-Dreadnoughts" at nine million apiece.

It gazes at the programmes of miners' unions and railway workers with something of the emotions with which primitive peoples, during an eclipse watch the shadow slowly creeping over the sun. These emotions are compounded of fear and wonder, with a sense of helplessness in face of calamity difficult to endure. And while it is gazing at these portents, its roof is being sold over its head, or its rates are being raised, or impossible demands are made on it for renewal of onerous "repairing leases," under the most accursed system by which any great and growing city like London has ever been held up to ransom. Even in such

circumstances its movements are not those of united organisation. Occasional letters to the newspapers are its only protest. They are written less with the hope of obtaining redress, than as "when some chord indignant breaks, to show that still she lives."

## V

I have said that the "squeeze" was being felt even before the war. I was noting it even in my study of the Condition of England, written fourteen years ago. It was due then to a desire for comfort, in an unorganised competitive system, surging against an increasing offer of service by which employers could prevent that standard ever being attained. The "squeeze" of that increasing offer was partly due to increasing competition from the children of the manual workers. It was partly due to the ever-increasing cost of living, and the demands on it—municipal rates and other imposts—in the respectable regions where the Middle Class live. And by the Middle Class I meant all those who worked with pen and brain instead of with hand.

I remember when I was at the Treasury receiving a petition from representatives of the Government assistant clerks. Their income varied from 21s. a week at the age of twenty to a maximum of less than £3 a week after fifteen years' service. They proved, in dismal demonstration, that it was impossible to live the clerk's life under 28s. a week, providing only necessities, for a single man in lodgings in the "respectable" suburbs. They had made inquiries as to cost of lodgings and living in such centres—Islington, Canonbury, Clapham, Tooting, and the like. "These localities are all well known as lodging centres for clerks," they asserted. "They provide the greatest available maximum of cleanliness and respectability of neighbourhood with a minimum of cost." But if the clerk desires such cleanliness and respectability he must pay the

price in sacrifice of some of life's necessities. "He is forced to forego the dinner, and he cannot spend money on clothes. He tries to preserve a respectable appearance, but his success is more apparent than real; his boots, socks, and inside apparel are generally in a condition that makes them a mere satire on the word clothes." "How then does he live?" inquires this mournful document. "Does he never go into the country? Does he never read? What are his amusements? What holiday does he take?" The queries remain unanswered. To the disabilities of such an austere life is added that of compulsory celibacy. And against this celibacy their petition protested not so much in the interests of themselves as of the State. "Hitherto it has been considered that to marry, to rear and bring up children, was a man's first duty to the State." "Yet," cries this voice from the Abyss, "the population is being recruited from the wrong sources. The average birth-rate, for instance, in such slum districts as Whitechapel is far greater than that in a respectable neighbourhood." The clerk is not permitted to marry and reproduce the clerk species on the principle, one supposes, of the artillery man in H. G. Wells' novel: "because 'ell was not built for rabbits."

I forget what was the result of the petition; as I left the Treasury before any decision was made. I believe the Government defence had been that these austere and compulsory celibates were actually being paid more than men doing similar work in private employment outside, and that competition to enter this respectable and dolorous career was increasingly severe. Heaven only knows what has become of them all. I suppose they have mostly been killed in the war, or are planning (if soldiers) to seek better fortune and matrimony abroad, or staggering through "respectable" life blindly, with bonuses inadequate to the present cost of living, as determined by private interest and Government control.

Of all the epithets the term "respectable" most excited the ridicule of the critics of the Middle Class.

Four years of furious fighting has silenced that ridicule for ever. The London clerk, the "pals" battalions of the big towns, all "Middle Class" regiments, have been tested and found true in the ultimate experiences of human tenacity and courage. No class has more distinguished itself for resourcefulness, endurance and determination in war. One may smile, perhaps, at the appeal to the Government to encourage propagation from "respectable" classes living on the margin of subsistence in the suburbs, rather than from other more doubtfully "respectable" classes living on the margin of subsistence in the slums. Yet, broadly speaking, the children of the Middle Class once provided the richest inheritance of the community. Its increasing sterility, however necessary under present conditions, is causing a substantial loss to the nation as well as a tragedy amongst individual lives. From these suburban centres the State should be able to draw continual supplies of fresh and vigorous young life. It does not do so. The personal tragedy has been revealed by the lightning flash of a world upheaval. The "only child" or "only son" which was before the war the sole luxury permitted to so many of those black-coated anchorites, has perished in the ultimate and fierce demands of war. He went out—in the great majority of cases—a volunteer. Every spare farthing had been spent on his upbringing from babyhood. He was to be the pride and assistance of his parents when they attained old age. Then from all the terraces and villas which occupy the hills round great cities came the news that no blood sprinkled on lintel or doorpost had been of any avail against the Angel of Death. A house had been left henceforth for ever desolate.

"He was killed," was a confession overheard in the train, "the day before we had our sale for Egg Day for the wounded. They asked me, wouldn't I like it put off. But I said no, I wouldn't have that. Not in all my grief and all my sorrow, I wouldn't have that. So we held our sale and made £10. Then when the twins were seventeen, on their birthday they came to me and said: 'Mother,



we've got to go.' Well, they found Harry had a weak heart, and I can't say I wasn't glad."

The condition of the clerks is also, though in lesser degree, that of the teachers. The real income, with present prices, of the teaching community is a scandal and a shame to a civilised State. Certainly no considerable progress can ever be made in the improvement of the new generations until the teachers of these generations are lifted altogether above the standard of genteel poverty into which most of them have been plunged.

Here, indeed, is one of the strongest trade unions, active and vigilant in safeguarding the interests of its members, and a certain advance in money wages has been granted by the State. The coal porters of London, in the boom after the war, receiving £4 a week wages, contemplated a strike for £6 a week. I have nothing to say against coal portorage, which is an honourable occupation. If I were a coal porter on £4 a week, and by strike or negotiation I could obtain £6 a week, I would undoubtedly support such a policy. But how many assistant teachers in England receive £6 a week? How many even £4? And what hope is there for the future of a nation which holds out to any careful parent twice the inducement to put his child into the career of coal portorage rather than into the career of teaching?

So the Middle Class exists to-day, profoundly disillusioned and unhappy, hoping for a fall in prices; hoping that the Government will prevent its ejection from its home, or new homes be built at cheaper rents; hoping that munitionettes will turn into servants again, and that the and is going to be made fit for heroes to live in. One characteristic of all this class has distinguished it alike in dark fortune and in bright—that is its political generosity. With the exception of the teachers it has all voted Tory. It voted Tory when Toryism was shattered in 1906; it voted Tory when Toryism was triumphant in 1918. Other Tory bulwarks have occasionally shown signs of restiveness—Land, Established Religion, Beer. And the landlord,

the Church and the brewer have received ample assistance from their friends. But the Middle Class and suburban England have not only never received help from any Tory Government. No Tory Government has ever shown any consciousness of their existence. They may have voted Tory in 1906 in the hope of "taxing the foreigner." They may have voted Tory in 1918 in the hope of Germany being made to pay all the cost of the war. But in these, as in all their concerted actions, their motives remain conjectural to this hour. They neither strive nor cry. Their voices are not heard in the streets, but only in the overcrowded railway carriages taking them to work, cursing a Government which most will support at the polls.

It is the record of life in a Beleaguered City, with only the sustaining belief that the siege will one day be raised and the captives set free. Few realise that this is not the abnormal courses of "war" which will endure for a moment, but the normal course of a "peace" which will last for a generation, which will outlast their own lives. Life may indeed become easier as boys and girls become wage-earners and the parents are saved from the enormous calamity of another child. But few even contemplate the possibility of the raising of that siege by any action taken by themselves, or any concerted attempt to burst the barriers and set men free. The whole testimony is of gigantic effort to "do without" and yet maintain appearances, to substitute pulse and lentils for clean Christian food, to use up savings, to "fake" appearances, to abandon holidays and everything that costs anything. The tax collector exacts his enormous imposts, and is meekly paid. The rate collector exacts his enormous imposts, and is paid with somewhat less meekness. The rise in prices is accepted as beyond human control, and indignation rarely passes beyond the retail tradesmen. Outside these, there is no interest and less understanding of what changes, international or local, could transfer their dolorous plight to the old, not altogether intolerable, standard. Beyond a determination

never to put their children into sedentary and clerkly occupations, which, when the children are sixteen, results in them entering these sedentary occupations, because there is nowhere else for them to go to, they remain dazed, like the victim of a room in the story of ancient torments, where the walls slowly closed up day by day until he was suffocated. They dare not demand equality of fortune, for they are vaguely conscious of immense, greedy and idle masses of prolific families below them, who would obviously receive "first cut" at the spoil. Their instincts, always conservative, lead them to hold on, still nursing unconquerable hope. To some an anti-waste campaign, to some the making of the working men to work—the collier to hew and the plumber to plumb; to some the extortion of great sums of money and goods from Germany (for why should one German child of the vanquished possess a new suit when their own—the victors—have to be content with second-hand?) will unlock the door and crown the coming of comfort again. But perhaps the wisest are those who face the facts faithfully, and realise that they must make the best of the new—a world of privation, of constant worry, of constant "doing without," but one in which the utmost simplicity of life and the complete abandonment of keeping up appearances may yet leave on this distracted planet things worth having.

"It is our pleasure," writes an Elementary School teacher, after recounting the record of "doing without"; "we delight in those priceless things which cost nothing. We go out to see the sunsets; we picnic on Saturdays. My hobby is painting. It pays for itself, and I am sure that when I am sixty I shall be able to paint." "Corot sold his first picture when he was sixty," he adds hopefully. In such a spirit some may find it still possible to endure; with human affection, and the "make-believes" of happiness in existence where all human life is make-belief; and the visions of sunset and dawn and all the splendour of passing things, perhaps now for the first time discovered; with something unconsciously moving within them, of

the high spirit of Dante's immortal challenge to his enemies :

“That since no gate led, by God's will,  
To Florence, but the one whereat  
The priests and money-changers sat,  
He still would wander ; for that still  
Despite the body's prison bars  
His soul possessed the sun and stars.”

So that even with the previous standard of comfort gone, these tired travellers may yet rise from “the body of this death” to no mean Paradise ; to see, as the old mystic wrote, “all the peace of even,” when “the sea itself floweth in your veins.” Until “you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars.”

*“ In the slums of cities, moving amongst indifferent millions, to mechanical employments, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbours, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin palace . . . often repaying the world’s scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple . . . everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and courage, everywhere the ensign of man’s ineffectual goodness—ah ! if I could show you this ! if I could show you these men and women all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging to some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls.”—STEWARTSON, Pulvis et Umbra.*

## CHAPTER IV

### LABOUR

THERE have been much advocacy and some attempts to "teach the working classes" the "practical economic theories" which, it is believed, will modify the wild demands of some of their leaders. That universal increased welfare can only be got by increase of production; that capital, representing savings, is necessary for the development of the resources of the world; that employment can only be increased by developing these resources; that idleness or "going slow" is not a remedy against unemployment, but a creator of unemployment—these and similar truisms of established economics are to be widely spread for the reading of those deluded by opposing sophistries. There may indeed be much useful work to be done in this direction. And in so far as it promotes a higher standard of effort, and a determination to obtain increase of production of wealth by any means practicable—not limited to the efforts of those who have only their labour to sell—some good may result from the attempt. Only in much of the economic theory, which is to be served out by the intellectuals who support the present order to the intelligent working classes, it cannot be assumed that it is merely necessary to state facts and to encourage clear thinking, in order to obtain the results which the advocates of the present Social order desire. On questions of vital issue—Nationalisation, for example, of monopolies, or the control of capital, or the limitation of profits—the advanced party can put up as good a fight as their opponents, not only on the street corner but by reference to authority and the professors of economic theory. It is doubtful

indeed to-day if the economic "progressives" cannot appeal to as authoritative pronouncements as the business men and merchants, and the theories and students these employ. The professors and teachers even of Oxford and Cambridge, and of the younger Universities, in many of these matters are mostly on the side of the working man. And any one who thinks that these difficult questions of Social discontent can be appeased by a campaign of educational economic irrigation, which will clean out the somewhat confused and muddy brain of the ardent but honest Socialist or Communist Trades Unionist, is living in dreams.

## I

Much nonsense, for example, is talked about Karl Marx by those who have never read a line of his writings, and believe him to be the Devil Incarnate. Marx was a plodding, painstaking German Jew; who wrote, in a style almost as unreadable as that of Hegel, one of the remarkable books of the world. Many of his conclusions I believe to be fallacious, and many of his prophecies have already proved false. But *Das Kapital* will probably live as long as the writings of Rousseau, and excite the same enthusiasm for "perfectability" in the Social order as Rousseau did for "perfectability" in political affairs—each having launched a Revolution of which no man can predict the end. And it is absurd to hear politicians who are entirely ignorant of his ideas using his name as that of some satanic character, and revealing their own shallowness of thought, in comparison with a man who at least endeavoured honestly to think over the nature of human life, and its destiny.

But of course there is only one in a hundred (or less) who is thinking in this way at all, or even endeavouring to understand Karl Marx in truncated translation. The jargon of the fiery and partially educated orator, ladled out through the medium of lecture or meeting, passes completely over the head of the masses of the people. They

do not wish to revolt against the "tyranny of the capitalistic system." They know nothing and care nothing about Guild or any other Socialism. They probably think Karl Marx to be a kind of jelly- or shell-fish. They vote Labour; but they vote Labour not from aspirations for the overthrow of the Capitalistic régime, or the nationalisation of anything or everything. They vote Labour because they see that the rich have certain of the desirable things of life, and they have not got them. They want to get them. They wanted to get them before the war. They want a good deal more to get them after the war, since they believe (and rightly) that they did as much for the winning of the war as the rich themselves.

I doubt if there would be any appreciable Social discontent (I am sure that it would be little vocal) if the wealthy, and the men who made wealth during the war, either concealed that wealth in fresh investments of capital, or led the austere life of the ascetic of riches. The miser—the most hated of figures in fiction—is far less dangerous to the community than the man who is freely "slopping the stuff about," and having a good time. Pale enthusiasts denounce the mass of the poor for being "wage slaves," and urge them to "unshackle their chains." It is not the "chains" the masses feel. It is that the others are enjoying themselves while they are working. And their pleasures are just those which those working would like to enjoy, if they could get the money to do it. It is absurd to suppose that the individual "poor" if on top, would immediately impose a rigid standard of virtue, a limited ornament in dress, an ascetic proportion of food and drink. It is absurd also to think that the industrial "poor" would endure for a fortnight a universal standard of equality with all other industrial "poor," workers and idlers at industry receiving equal payment regardless of the work done. Ask the skilled engineers if they would be content with equal payment with the unskilled worker, or the bricklayer with the bricklayer's labourer. A Socialism attempting to establish, through a *Samurai* or Civil Service, compulsory



virtue on the triumphant people would disappear within a month amid universal execration. "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" The English people, even for the advantages of equality or the abolition of poverty, would never accept that standard of compulsory virtue imposed by Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, which makes a day in their cities (as an observer has told me) like nothing so much as a Scottish Sabbath. But it is equally absurd to suppose that you can batten these poor under hatches and compel them to toil for long hours at unwelcome occupations, and for mean reward, on the ground that otherwise they would be starving for lack of "Capital," when they see "Capital" recklessly destroyed every year and month and day by the very persons and classes who are advocating the continuity of their imprisonment. "If you divide up the communal cake," is the warning, "there will never be another communal cake to divide." "If we divide up the communal cake," is the reply, "we shall at least get part of it; now we are encouraged continually to create communal cakes of which the plums always go to others." It is an argument that goes back far in British History, and is uninfluenced by dreary, if distinguished, economic discussion of "Class War" and the like, by German Jews.

And those who have been inspired by the bewildering brilliance of the economics of such German Jews and University Professors, always find that the appeal to the street corner is just this appeal. Penury and Plenty fought together for five years, risking life each day, as each was told, that both might live. Much of Plenty died gallantly in the war; and some part of Penury became Plenty by remaining at home and profiting out of the nation's necessities. And now Penury, returned from the war, aided by Penury which had lived through the war at home gazing at profiting or profiteering, is up against Plenty; with a strong desire to get some of its goods and pleasures.

Bodies of intelligent and vigorous young men are talking on this question. "What did you fight the war

for? For whose benefit has victory been obtained?" They are talking continually, day and night, in a seven-day week, in meetings held outside the works gate, before breakfast, in the dinner-hour, or in surrounding halls in the evening. They are preaching, and with enormous energy, something in the nature of a crusade. Their gospel is simple enough. It is the oldest gospel in the world, and may be preached till the day of judgment. "They are clothed in velvets and rich stuffs; we are forced to wear poor cloth," was the preaching with which John Ball roused the peasants of mediæval England into revolt. "They have handsome seats and manors, while we must brave the wind and rain in the fields. But it is from our labour they have wherewithal to support their pomp." To-day it is the "profiteer" who is attacked, with many outrageous and telling examples; the monstrous inequality of fortune as exhibited by the contrast between the life of the "millionaire" and the life of the children in a city slum: the contrast between the lot of the "possessors" and the lot of the dispossessed; the realisation that in bad times, at least, the caprice or hatred of an employer or his manager may throw a man out of work with no hope of gaining any work elsewhere: a worse sentence than penal servitude. This can be correctly described as economic slavery.

Accompanying this destructive criticism of the present social order there is also a vision of "better things." It is scarcely "Bolshevism." Not one in a thousand who freely use the term have any idea of what "Bolshevism" means. They associate it merely with general upheaval and assassinations in Russia and unpleasant disturbances at home. But it is a creed denouncing "capitalism" and all "idle wealth"; a belief—whose sincerity need not be doubted—that by the reduction or elimination of the excess profits and interests of capital, and a direct attack on the great landlord and millionaire, the working people may found a new Society, and get rid of their present disabilities.

The amount of support it receives depends largely on the mental condition and outward experience of the auditors. If they feel wages actually increased, if they get more leisure and a greater increase in the pleasures they enjoy in their leisure, if football is exciting and attainable, and cinemas interesting, beer is cheap and employment certain, the great majority will never, in the present condition of education, concern themselves with the theory of surplus value or the indignities of being wage slaves : or, as in a Socialist catechism, "the consciousness by the proletariat of their commodity value in a bourgeois state" : or, as I have heard a learned professor advocate : "universal token payment of terminating validity." If they feel the standard pinching—and it pinches everywhere to-day—and yet the nation were more or less homogeneous in level, so that expensive pleasures were impossible in days of scarcity—they might be content to endure till better times come. But it is doubtful if they will be content to endure for long if bad times persist, and at the same time expensive enjoyments continue unheeded ; if, while a million and a half men and women are out of work, they become convinced that there is a great luxury expenditure and waste from an indifferent "Upper Class" above. The poor do not want the "Capital" of the rich. They want the money spent on enjoyment by the rich, in order to spend it on themselves. They are told they have a right to it. If they can't get all, they will get some. They do not accept, like St. Francis, the Gospel of Poverty. They accept the Gospel of Enjoyment ; in a universe of chance and caprice, from which belief in a reverse of fortune in another world has largely vanished, and where death so soon ends all.

## II

The curious part is that to Penury, reading his popular newspaper, the whole world outside his slum or village seems a limitless cataract of extravagance. . . .

Scientists, estimating statistics of population, prove that there is nothing like enough to "go round." How can Penury heed these scientists, when it sees a post-war England revealed in its only channel of communication, the popular Press: depicting the call for "madder music and for stronger wine" even than that supplied to the England, which in 1914 was dancing on the edge of catastrophe.

The attitude of "Kensington" towards the coal village or London slum is pretty generally reflected in the newspapers. It is a queer compound of ignorance, hatred and fear. But the attitude of the coal village towards "Kensington" is far less known. It can only be understood when one remembers that there are no avenues of communication at all between one and the other except through the popular Press. The coal village sees the life of all the "Kensingtons" only as reflected through these limited means of interpretation. And the publications of the eager young men concerned with wage slavery and the like go down hopelessly in competition with the papers that depict the pleasures of Society which has survived or enriched itself in the war. Labour attempts papers full of close reasoning or angry attacks on "Capitalists," "Fat," or the wealthy. If Labour knew its job it would merely endeavour to provide stronger meat than these pictorial papers with enormous circulations, describing the idleness and empty pleasures which continue while the poor are perishing.

"Alas, of those divided Races," wrote Ruskin fifty years ago, "of whom one was appointed to teach and guide the other, which had indeed sinned deepest—the unteaching or the untaught? Which are now guiltiest—those who perish or those who—forget?" But Ruskin has been dead a generation, and most of his philosophy died with him. Then the poor most hated the rich: now the rich most hate the poor. We are cutting down the funds devoted to their teaching, instead of increasing them a hundredfold; and the attitude defined by the most distinguished of our elder statesmen is that of the modern

philosophy : "The unnumbered millions who never attain anything, I can afford to forget—as their fellow-men forget them, and as probably God forgets them."

And this is why nine-tenths of the argument addressed to the coal village from outside by those who lecture to it on elementary economics or the principles of demand and supply fall upon entirely deaf ears. There is something tragic, indeed, in the antithesis of outlook among honest citizens of the same community and nation, as exhibited under present conditions.

Most post-war "strikes" are urged on, not by the Kensingtons' conception of the life of, say, the coal workers, but by the coal workers' inadequate conception of the life of Kensington. No "subsidised industry" desires to mulct other working-class industries poorer than itself. No economic student of a Labour College desires a limitation of the "capital" required to increase the industry. But both the ignorant crowd and the educated student think that the money spent on luxury should first be appropriated to Labour or Capital, before the wages of the one are reduced or the accumulation of the other destroyed. Capitalistic papers shriek against the uncensored 'Labour Press. But this is not the Press in which the majority of the workers are interested. Nor are its theories necessarily agreeable to the populations of the poor. It is the "capitalistic" Press itself which all unconsciously, and merely with the desire to meet the competitive demand for the greater circulation, is exciting the workers to discontent, which is sometimes a revolt and sometimes a despair.

The workmen's staple reading is the Sunday newspaper. From this newspaper nine out of ten derive what conception they possess of the world outside their limited universe. There is no anti-capitalist Sunday newspaper. There is not even a Sunday *Daily Herald*. Yet there are something approaching ten million copies of Sunday newspapers circulating among the working-class population of Britain. And it is from these that the average cottage

home derives much of its impression of that "other nation" of the rich, which urges it to tighten its belt and be content with half its wages in response to iron economic law. One is startled in looking at these, for the most part, not discreditable productions, to find how little the proprietors of those with the largest circulation can realise what the effect of their continual propaganda must be among populations suddenly plunged into poverty. Some, indeed, are frankly records of crime, with a dash of obscenity. So that except for the harmless results of pigeon-flying and popular football matches, nothing seems to be going on in the world but murders with violence, adulteries in high places, indecent assaults, unnatural crime. But even those newspapers which have eschewed this seemingly irresistible appeal to a popular taste, which are clean, interesting, fairly well written, topical, exhibit a world so remote from the cities of poverty and so easily occupied with the kind of pleasure which is to poverty for ever denied, as to create the impression of great classes giving their lives merely to the careless pursuit of enjoyment. Consider, for example, the effect among two million unemployed workmen, and millions of others suddenly threatened with substantial loss of wages, of the great Sunday picture papers which circulate in their homes. They are good enough of their kind, and no fault can be found on the ground of their appeal to the instincts of lust or cruelty. They simply provide pictures and articles showing the everyday life of a Society which appears to be relieved from the need of wage-earning, and to be occupied with the problem of how to pass time as pleasantly as possible. You may examine, for example, any one week's issue, no different from others. Pictures exhibit "A charming variation step in fox-trot, specially demonstrated on the Italian roof-garden"; "novelties at a *palais de danse* fancy-dress ball"; "Colonel and Mrs. X. riding at a meet of a hunt"; "Miss Y. and Major Z. in a foreign watering-place"; "Lady M. enjoying a round of golf at Biarritz"; "Lord A. and Colonel B. playing golf on the Riviera." A page is given to scantily

dressed but attractive actresses, and discussion of the plays in which they are appearing. Another to more scantily dressed and similarly attractive cinema stars. Another, entitled "Mainly for Women," shows illustrations of "velvet ivy leaves trim a hat of pearl-grey georgette"; "A charmingly draped frock in georgette and satin"; and "Small spring flowers covering the upturned brim of this toque." One surmises that this page is not designed to appeal to the wives of the fifteen hundred thousand unemployed. In another paper, illustrations show women playing lawn-tennis, "the Hon. Mrs. F. beating Miss G."; or Yoshiwari's win at the Palace handicap, beating Merry Thrush and Orange Prince. Or a Society wedding, with rows of little Honourables in elaborate dresses. Or, even on the same pages that show pictures of miners on strike, "gowns of white satin and crystal trimming and tulle."

The letterpress of such papers gives accounts of revelry and sport on the Riviera, gambling at Monte Carlo, articles on problems of auction bridge, records of country-house entertainments, women's fashions, novelties at fancy dress balls, golf contests, approaching fashionable divorcees, and the Wills of men who have made hundreds of thousands out of factory, workshop and mine. The advertisement columns aggravate the general sense of a Society indifferent to all but pleasure and comfort, with one column on beauty powder, which "removes face shine and has an exquisite perfume," and another on "bath saltrates," and another on "six leading actresses' advice on the complexion," and another again on "obesity cured without drugs."

In the most popular features of these periodicals, the serial stories which are read so breathlessly by so vast an audience, the course of true love pursues its tangled way to ultimate victory invariably to a region in which money cares are unknown. The virtuous typist marries the son of the head of the firm, as once the virtuous village maiden married the son of the squire; and soars with him into a region where the difference between butter and margarine prices is negligible, and no one need eat Canterbury lamb.

The whole vision, in fiction, in pictures, and in record, is of a world of beautiful, careless women, of athletic, idle men, provided with unlimited money from some source unknown, whose enjoyments are only disturbed by the failure of beauty, or the falling out of hair, or the growth of obesity, or the coming of wrinkles and old age; which philanthropic compounders of apparatus and medicines are prepared to remove, at a moderate charge.

The singular element in all this is that the owners of these papers are providing exactly what the people desire. They are running purely business concerns. They are finding what the public wants, and the public wants this and no other. It is in the position of a child which escapes from a drab reality into the fairyland of pantomime. The city of poverty, in reading of this universe of idle and luxurious people, is reading of such a fairyland. Under normal conditions it has no envy of fairyland. It likes above everything to picture to itself the coming of some such transformation as that in which the Fairy Prince takes Cinderella to the ball. It delights in the popular *feuilleton*, with its story of sensational change. The boy likes to think he may win the £1000 offered for the guessing of football results, and himself guesses every week with unconquerable hope. The girl cherishes the dream that some day there will come to her the proposal of marriage from the son of the war profiteer. There is no condemnation of this life because it is the life most would like to lead if they could attain it. The majority would show wonder and incredulity if any one once definitely in it, abandoned it. It is the very poorest of the people in London, for example, who emerge with enjoyment from their slum dwellings to see a Royal procession, to see a popular marriage or funeral, before trailing back to the darkness of their own kingdom. And thus in time of prosperity the fairyland is regarded without resentment, as being a region in which some are fortunate enough to attain what any might desire.



## III

The idea that men and women might really get sick of all this—abandon attention to the musical comedy, or refuse to have a “flutter” at Monte Carlo when the opportunity is offered, or eat rich dinners with pretty women as companions—never enters the heads of the majority. This is the appropriate life of the rich. But they are now being told that it is *their* money—or could be made their money—which is being spent in this way. And they surmise dimly what Professor Sidgwick and others, in writing on luxury, have propounded as a solemn thesis. You may not increase the sum of human happiness by taxing the wealthy and so (in theory) diminish their pleasures for the moral improvement of the poor. You can certainly do so by allotting that sum to the actual pleasures of the poor. To remove the cost of a racehorse of £50,000 and spend the money on economic education or free copies of Karl Marx would obviously violate the Utilitarian philosophy. But to spend that £50,000 in rendering many more football matches accessible in the afternoon, or in having more or cheaper “Charlie Chaplin” in the evening, would undoubtedly make for “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.”

It is when unexpected adversity comes like a sudden bolt from the blue that feeling is inflamed. The poor do not believe that the increase of their wages is dependent on taxing poorer men than themselves. They believe that it can be obtained by taxing richer men than themselves: by taxing fairyland. They have no idea of the dimensions of fairyland, or of what would happen if the wealth of fairyland was actually divided among the poor. But many of them have fought in the war, and all of them have worked in the war, in order that fairyland may remain intact from German invasion. And to-day, while pictures, gossip and advertisement still record the doings of a fairyland seemingly utterly unmoved by their present plight, they find themselves lectured on the need for the cutting of their wages

to the bone, in order, as it appears to them, that fairyland may still persist in its fascinating, irrelevant life.

Against this idea Labour is continually being told that Fairyland has no money to spend, that foreign trade has shrivelled up, and that Capital receives no reward. And then it is suddenly confronted with such a contrast as this, and it promptly refuses to believe these assertions, and thinks Fairyland maintains this pleasant life despite the misery of its own condition.

"Sir — and Lady —," it reads, "have solved the problem of entertaining on a large scale, and yet living in the suburbs. They have a beautiful house at Highgate, to which all the best known tennis players flock from time to time. During the hot weather, Lady —'s luncheon parties have been followed by bridge, which is continued until the sun's midday heat has abated a little. Then tennis commences. At the end of the sets, sixteen bathrooms are placed at the disposal of the guests, who are thus able to drive back to town cool and refreshed after their strenuous exercise."

"By spending every penny of their wages," Miss Sharp says, "the miners and their families are just keeping themselves alive; there is nothing over for extra nourishment, for clothes, or for any of the graces of life which distinguish men from animals." One of the miners told Miss Sharp that "most of them take down only bread and margarine nowadays," for their midday meal. And a miner's wife said to her: "If I want to buy anything that isn't food, I have to starve Thursday and Friday."

It would be well if those who are spending, would realise that it is necessary to go softly and behind closed doors, and to recognise that they are being watched by thousands of eyes, awakened to criticism by the grim education of war. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that revolutions and calamities are created, not by what happens, but by what men think has happened. The French Revolution, for example, from the wild views circ-

lated about the Diamond Necklace to the fever which created the September Massacres, was swept along its terrible and magnificent course by "facts" which all men believed then, and every man knows to be untrue to-day. You may plead that as a matter of fact these foolish extravagances are confined to a small class, and, even if they were all suspended, would make no great difference to the man who works down a mine or is confined in a laborious workshop. But at a time when the wages of the worker are being everywhere reduced, in some cases below subsistence level, and there are nearly two million of unemployed, social content is not stimulated by the reading of such items as these in a popular paper :

"What constitutes a theatre supper? After seven years many people naturally have forgotten what should be taken, and also what wines should be drunk at such a meal without peril of interfering with one's sleep. I give the supper menu at the Savoy last night, for which the charge was half a guinea, including dancing in the foyer :

"Natives, Hors d'Œuvres Variés; Consommé Double en Tasse; Homard Cardinal; Suprême de Volaille Jeannette, Salade Lorette; Coupe Jazz-Band, Friandises."

"Here the drinks called for varied, some of the diners being content with 'cups,' others with white wines, champagnes, and whiskies and sodas. There was, of course, no call for cocktails or liqueurs.

"In Soho, the Rendezvous, on the other hand, pinned its faith on the following excellent menu, priced modestly at 3s. 6d. :

"Huitres Royales, or  
Consommé Double en Tasse,  
Delice de Sole Rendezvous.  
Cotelette d'Agneau Belle Vue, or  
Perdreau en Chartreuse, or  
Petite Entrecote Bernaise.  
Pêche Melba or Crème au Chocolat"

"With this meal, last night, champagne was in most demand.

"Sir Ernest Wild, K.C., M.P., took advantage of the inaugural gala supper at the Rendezvous to voice the general indignation at the prospect of London's supper hours with drinks being changed from midnight till 11.30. Sir Ernest made it clear that this would be a gross breach of the agreement arrived at with the Government over the compromise Licensing Act."<sup>1</sup>

The "general indignation" being excited by the limitation against drinking champagne after 11.30: and the "great victory" celebrated by the above modest banquets being the surrender of the Government, by the abandonment of such an unendurable regulation!

Small wonder that, with such incidents as these revealed in every day's papers, Mr. Frederic Harrison, at an age not far short of his century, should utter, from the experience of so long a life, a warning which is something of a prophecy of the impossibility of Society continuing long on such a basis:

"The Middle Class," he says, "the professional class, the rich and the well-born, well-bred, the so-called idle class, cannot make food, clothing or houses. But can they do nothing to help Society in this hour of stress? Yes! They can show an example of self-denial, of self-restraint, of discipline and public spirit. They can cease to flaunt their idleness in the face of the workers. . . . It is appalling to see what infinite waste of precious labour is flung away on horse-racing, on fantastic clothes, jewellery, joy-motors, unwholesome food and drink. Do these reckless spend-thrifts know that to-day the food, the coal, the conveyance of people is being given them as doles far below cost price by a huge debt laid on our children to pay?"

Or that the leader of a great political Party, pleading, not for political funds, but for educational and health institutions, all on the verge of bankruptcy, and with their solicitations having passed unheeded, should find himself compelled to use such strong words as these:

"I am speaking quite seriously," said Mr. Asquith,

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from *Evening Standard*.

"when I say that in my judgment that gross and growing disproportion between the good purposes to which wealth might be devoted, and the frivolous and worthless, the transitory and unproductive purposes to which it is in fact devoted, is one of the tragedies of our modern English life."

#### IV

Strangers sometimes see most clearly into the game, and, in previous study of an England which has passed away, I have often been indebted to the experience or confessions of the visiting publicist. A remarkable study of the present condition of parts of industrial Britain has recently been issued, under the discomfoting title of *Full Up and Fed Up*. The author, an American University graduate, who had played at being an artisan in various cities of the United States, wandered through selected sample industrial centres in this country, living as a workman, and conversing freely with his fellows. It was in the period when the prosperity which succeeded the Armistice, and absorbed all labour willing to work at almost any price, had fallen into sudden collapse; and when the high dreams of a renovated Society with work for all and modest comfort had vanished before practical conditions worse even than "the old world" which had "passed away." All Government promises of a land fit for heroes to live in had become dust and ashes. The Triple Alliance of coal, railway and dock workers, which once seemed to menace Parliament itself, and kept the more timid awake at nights for fear of its power, had crumbled to pieces. The owners and the Government, often in close association one with the other, were driving down wages in all trades, often below pre-war money remuneration, although the pound still only averaged some 12s. 6d. of pre-war purchasing power. These reductions were being made on the plea that only by them could the nation or the great industrial "combines" be saved from bankruptcy. The rich were both sick of and afraid of the poor.

"Our Boys," who had fought so gallantly that nothing could be too good for them when they returned, had become "these men" who refused to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, and who were supposed to have an eye upon the imitation of Russian Revolutions or (in some cases) to be stimulated by Russian money. A vast disillusionment and disenchantment brooded over half-silent cities and half-closed factories which were once the scenes of busy life. The Trades Unions were shrinking in numbers. All faith in Government had gone. The Labour leaders complained of the continued undermining of their authority by those who wished to occupy their places or (below) by a rebellious rank and file. The rank and file, whenever articulate, complained that their leaders—and there were some flagrant examples—deserted their cause at the first opportunity, for well-paid and secure Government service, or were so occupied in each trying to oust the other from the political posts which they hoped to occupy when Labour would (eventually) come into power, as to be indifferent to the tightening economic pressure upon those who paid them. Industry had become dislocated, first by the succession of strikes, while profits were enormous, in order that the working man might obtain some share of the profits, and then by a succession of strikes, while profits were vanishing, in order that the working man might retain some of that increase he had obtained. This was not industrial organisation. It was industrial chaos; almost to be termed industrial warfare. It is computed that in 1919 we lost thirty-four million working days through industrial disputes; in 1920 over twenty-seven million; in 1921 nearly ninety million, and in the first half of 1922, thirty million.

Mr. Williams is wandering among and conversing with the workmen in the latter portion of this calamitous era: in short, in the England of to-day. Carefully dressing for the part, he travelled from one big industrial centre to the other, asking for work. Only once did he obtain it: in the Rhondda Valley, coal mines. Elsewhere he drifts about

among the other workless, listens to their conversation, and in response to their queries tells of things in America. The possibilities of mistaking the individual opinion for the general would seem to be discounted by the incessant repetition of the same sentiments in different districts.

The most outstanding feature common to the feelings of the docker in London, the mine-repairer in the Rhondda, the ship hands and shipwrights of Glasgow, is a sense of absolute disbelief and mistrust in the goodwill and good faith of those ruling him; whether they are "Lloyd George," or "the bleedin' mawsters." The Labour leaders, the moment they vanish out of sight, acquire this nimbus of mistrust. The core and centre of these embittered groups are the returned soldiers. "It's a rotten old country to go through hell for, and to lose two of your brothers for," is one comment. "Millions the company 'awve made during the war," is the fixed belief of all the South Wales miners. "The Kaiser we licked buys himself a castle. And you and I of the working classes that licked him, and put our bodies between him and Britain's homes—we have nowhere to lay our heads," cries a Socialist speaker on Glasgow Green. "'Fit for 'eroes to live in'—that's wot they told us afore we was let out from that bloo-oody war, and there's me out of work for months and months," complains a docker.

Under the shadow of this universal mistrust, everything that occurs has sinister origin. "Propaganda—that's it. They take the American offer for the ten thousand tons of rails here in oor streets, not to save thot thirty thousand poon', but to scare us workers into being more tractive like." "Ah, ye've been reading the capitalistic Press."

Of course, across great strips of industry the case is different. Wherever the steel industry is found, there appears good understanding and humaner conditions. The machinery for removing grievances works smoothly. This may be due to the sliding scale agreement on wages, which has worked so well for years. It may be due to the

fact that in sharp contrast with, say, coal or railways, the owners are "in the business." "The Union as a general thing wants to be quite fairly reasonable if treated with understanding." The conditions at Middlesbrough (much improved since Lady Bell wrote her classic survey), Coventry, Barnsley, seem to Mr. Williams to be good, and the workers fairly contented and with confidence in the heads of the business. He puts this down to the fact that the owners live among their men, and realise grievances early before they have time to create widespread soreness. He also notes the effect of the housing question in this matter of industrial unrest.

Looking from underneath, Mr. Williams evidently has a low opinion of the quality of the minds directing British industry. They are too slow in adopting new machinery and new methods, some of the engines being "as old as the factory," demanding an excess of manual work, which, in handling such substances as red-hot steel and iron, creates danger. This widespread use of obsolete machinery is recognised by the men who work it, and plays its own part in creating discontent. He is scornful of the "quite general lack of respect for the technician and the scientist," exemplified particularly in the "awful" telephone arrangements. On the whole this poverty of quality in the directing mind strikes him as being worst in South Wales, where the owners seem to him to show recklessness in creating avoidable grievances, slowness in removing them, and a general woodenness and vindictiveness which reflects itself immediately in the mind of the miner. "In over forty year thot be the first time thot any man for the company do sye to me, 'Tom, thot be a good job,'" comments one old miner. "Seven deputations we have had on this bloody mud—and only been insulted for our pains. I tell you, you can get nothing here except by force," complains another. "The thing they can't understand, these masters, is that we agitators cannot possibly *make* mischief. Ali we can do is to call attention to it when they themselves furnish us with it," says a passionate young



"Bolshie," who is "gambling the next ten or twelve years of my life on my confidence that Russia has found the solution of the whole problem of modern industrial life." When Mr. Williams, in his own person, hints to the management that a particular official is detested, and that a change might produce an improvement, he is met by the mechanical retort: "But no one can possibly know the men better, or be more sympathetic with them than he, for he used to be one of them," without, apparently, any effort at inquiry. The result is summed up in a phrase by an old miner discussing the local brand of "Bolshies." "They're overproud of themselves and their extremes. But, after all, they're the mouthpiece of the whole crowd of us, for all of us are fair un'appy."

In a general view, Mr. Williams is amazed and horrified at the universal prevalence and intensity of drinking. The worst occasion is seen in Glasgow, where he draws a panorama of squalor and sottishness with a Dantesque sombreness of tone. The second element, new to him, common, at any rate, to the dangerous and skilled trades of coal mining and iron work, is the close corporation the men have made to protect their jobs. Coming from the looser texture of American industry, the author hears with amazement of "two years since a man has been fired from round here." He notes a lack of ambition as a consequence; no one seems to wish to "get out of their group." To set against that want of ambition is the hereditary skill of Sheffield in dealing with steel, where father and grandfather have been in the same trade.

Mr. Williams could be criticised on the ground that he very often treats the best works in America as if they were the standard mean level of conditions there, and compares them with the worst level here, such as Glasgow. In this country, 40,000 people living in one-room tenements is no more universally typical of a British industrial town than "a motor before the door," of the factory hand is typical of all American industrialism. Pittsburg and parts of Chicago are not exactly antechambers of the Kingdom of

Heaven. The one clear gain the British working man has got over the American is the eight-hour day, and Mr. Williams is frankly puzzled as to how and why it seems to work so well, and not to diminish output. But numbers of working men look wistfully towards America, "where a man's kiddies have a chawnst." One of the bitterest grievances concerns this matter of education. "There we was with them low-down foreigners . . . and still they could talk more languages than we bloody English," complains a South Wales smelter. "Something wrong, I tell you, with our education, or we wouldn't have to go to war to find out how much we fellows herc don't know." Many try in a desperate haste to fill the gaps, and educate themselves, "as the Russians are doing," on a jumble of tabloid Karl Marx, illustrated by imperfectly remembered figures of profits and costs. These are the most promising types. The less disinterested turn for consolation to the public-house.

As a whole, judged by any absolute standard of what any civilised community ought to be, the picture is a gloomy one, shading into deep black of needless squalor and misery. Times are hard and difficult now. But what was our prosperous pre-war world about, leaving these atrocious patches of vile conditions producing drink, and drink confirming vile conditions? As a whole it would seem the human race is far too tolerant of remediable injustice. One can at times feel impatient at the patience of the poor.

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## V

"How these poor live," has generally been the subject of a dissertation designed for some definite end. It has been the work of sensational writers, painting deep shadows, designed to arrest attention and stimulate compassion in the interest of some political creed or private charity. The scientific record and classification of the life, knowledge, interests and affections of manual worker or com-

fortable or rich has scarcely yet begun. Men plunge contentedly into large generalisations, with insufficient data. And the great majority assert what they want to believe. Consider, for example, the verdict as given at one of the times when the waters are stirred—say at a by-election. The result is always ascribed to a variety of causes. The winner and his agents and friends give the causes of their victory, and the loser and his agent and friends give the causes of their defeat. But both give the causes as they want to believe them, or as they want the world to believe them, or as they believe them ignorantly. Neither has made any real attempt to understand what actually happened. Just before the war, for example, the Conservatives were winning all the elections owing to the unpopularity of the Insurance Act—owing to its unpopularity in so far as it embodied Conservative principles of contribution and compulsion. But as they wished to destroy Home Rule, they proclaimed universally that the elections were won because the people would not have Home Rule, although Home Rule scarcely influenced a vote. The Liberals, on the other hand, knew that it was the unpopularity of the Insurance Act which was losing them votes. But they would not acknowledge it, owing to the Act being the work of their darling leader : and they ascribed the change to irrelevant causes and hoped for better times. But if some impartial and unprejudiced observer had but taken the trouble to visit every house in a row of workman's cottages, finding out from each voter the reason why he had voted or abstained, he would have got far nearer to the truth than by interviews with the men at the centre of the machine. And if to-day some such observer were to work through the obscurer streets of any city in a contested Election, and ascertain why men and women are supporting Coalition or National or Radical or Labour candidate, or equally dissatisfied with them all, he would find himself nearer the truth than any newspaper diagnosis of what the people are thinking.

Such researches as those of Messrs. Charles Booth and Rowntree have provided the foundations of a sociology, so far as the things of the body are concerned : wages, food and clothing, house accommodation and the rest. A further foundation was attempted in a research undertaken in Sheffield—a typical northern town containing some of the highest paid as well as some of the poorest in the country—during the past few years, in the kingdom of the spirit. The result has been published under the title of *The Equipment of the Workers*. The investigators were members of the St. Philip's Settlement Education and Economics Research Society, and they were inquiring into "the adequacy of the adult manual workers for the discharge of their responsibilities as heads of households, producers and citizens." Their method was to take some four hundred cases, each of working men and women chosen at random, and as a result of conversation and inquiry, fill in an elaborate *questionnaire* of comprehensive human activity. The man's reading, his knowledge, his employment of leisure, his association with political party, Church or Chapel, Trades Union or Co-operative Store : his views on certain selected fundamental questions, the nature of his home, his ideals of life, his appreciation or lack of appreciation of the seriousness and purpose of it—all these were faithfully recorded.

The result was a series of cross-sections of human life in a then prosperous industrial town of quite remarkable interest. The interest does not lie directly in the classification obtained, the revelation of "adequacy" or "inadequacy" with the proportions of each, or in the actual political and social creed so vigorously advocated. The investigators adopted a high and perhaps a little bleak standard of excellence. They were evidently of the class that responds to the appeals of Mr. Albert Mansbridge and the Workers' Educational Association. They dedicated their book to the memory of "Our Comrade, W. C. Anderson"; and they found most of the well-equipped adult manual workers to be Socialists, or Radicals now leaning towards Labour.

They examined rigorously the employment of a scanty leisure. They frowned on gossip and a glass of beer, and looked with suspicion on nights spent at the "movies." They just were tolerant of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas, but they had no use for the music-hall ditty and the popular sentimental hymn.

In consequence, the general results of their inquiry filled them with depression. They found only a comparatively small proportion of their subjects "well-equipped" for citizenship. They found almost the same number "mal-equipped." They found the great proportion "inadequately equipped"—neither for God nor for His enemies. A similar investigation would show a similar result in almost every class of Society in every generation. The majority are the average. To most readers of the life-history of these subjects the wonder will be not that "equipment" is inadequate, but that any "equipment" remains at all. They emerge from a childhood of poverty, with education which in almost every case taught them little, and was scandalously short, to a manhood of struggle, never far above the line of submergence. Their leisure for use, good or ill, is hopelessly cramped and confined. Their opportunities of enjoyment, outside pretty exacting manual work, are few. The wonder is not that they present blank amazement at inquiries concerning the work of Darwin, Dante, Huxley, Lodge, Shaw, Haeckel or Aristotle; but that they possess energy to struggle on, and adorn their house with oleographs, read the popular newspapers, and attend the popular cinemas. The wonder is less that they cannot mention the names of the Municipal Councillors of Sheffield or the five Members of Parliament, as that they have the slightest interest in the existence of any one of them. To do them justice, very few of them have that interest. But all present some pleasant vignette pictures provocative of thought. Here is one of twenty-two. "An effective Trades Unionist—a keen Labour politician—has read a lot of Dickens, Ruskin and Wells—has seen some of Shaw's plays—loves the country—fond of music—two of

his remarks : " In Sheffield they give you, not a home, but accommodation," and " It is better to build a dam than a cathedral." Of another, a cutler in four rooms : " His eyes gleamed," says the investigator, " when I told him of the books at the W.E.A. House he could go and read there." Another " hates St. Philip's—says the locality is so bad physically and morally for his children—reads Blatchford's books, *Labour Leader*, *Herald*, etc.—denounced the Churches for their hypocrisy." These are the " well-equipped " working class into whose hand the power of the nation is passing. But they number less than one-fifth of the total. The " inadequately equipped " are less vigorous, though not without interest. " Could talk pretty well about politics, but did not seem to know anything of H. A. L. Fisher ! Fond of reading—we talked about the *Christmas Carol*." Or a forge man, aged fifty-four : " Sometimes goes to lectures, especially if illustrated by a lantern, always saw the children attended school regularly, chief pleasure the ' Cinema,' fond of horses, walking, fishing, gardening, likes to hear a sentimental song—apathetic member of Trade Union—never reads a book, buys a ' Special ' to see if a horse has won, takes no interest whatever in politics." In short, the mentality and outlook of a hunting squire, in a Sheffield environment. He was regretfully placed by the investigator in Class 2.

One significant fact is that almost all those " adequately equipped " for the business of life found their original stimulus in the activity of church or chapel. Almost all, of the men at least, have abandoned membership of those churches or chapels for what they believe to be a freer air. Yet they retain, for the most part, the religion which is probably, if all the truth could be told, the dominant religion of to-day. They vaguely believe in mind as creator of the Universe, and in a Providence which watches over the doings of men. They believe that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. They have no certainty of extinction of personality at death, though their vision of a future life is little more than that of the (early) Hebrew

literature ("The dead praise not Thee, O Lord!") and the earlier Greek or Roman civilisations—of a shadowy or phantom world which they do not wish to contemplate, and in preparation for which they do not wish to be occupied. They express admiration for the character and teaching of Jesus Christ, but completely disbelieve in the miraculous parts of the Gospel narrative, and have no use for the theology which proclaims His unique position. They have left the churches because they find the messages proclaimed in them useless for the age in which they live. They have lost that faith in the possibility of communion with a benignant Deity, and in reparation and triumph in a future world, which has sustained the poor throughout all previous ages; but they have not found for the most part any adequate substitute.

They are as indifferent to Science as to Religion. Literature and Art are nothing to them. Only music makes a frequent appeal, and that not the music of the halls, which many profess to despise. A proportion astonishing to those who only know the working peoples of South England, and especially of London, find real pleasure in good music—opera and classical performances—and every manufacturing town has a live choral society of manual workers, of which societies Sheffield was one of the earliest. But the Sheffield University is as remote from them as the Sheffield Cathedral. They vaguely surmise that it is a place where the children of wealth and leisure may obtain superfluous knowledge. Their ideal of a really fine building is almost entirely concentrated on the Sheffield Town Hall. None of them wish to leave Sheffield, except those who have longings for some other crowded industrial town—home-sickness generally, for Rotherham or Bradford or Hull. They all desire—and especially the women—better houses, with more room to live. They would like to live on the hills around the crater of noise and smoke which contains Sheffield's half-million souls. The search for any wish to return "Back to the Land" produced a discouraging response. But in ideals for old age, nearly all expressed

desire for some experience of tranquillity and repose away from the place of the working day—a little cottage among the hills, a little farm; above all, in many cases, a poultry farm; there still appearing to abide in the heart of the industrial strife, some vision of a rightful ending of the days of man, including, as desirable ingredients, an arm-chair in a little garden, and flowers blossoming, and chickens feeding in the sunshine.

In face, however, of these limitations, there are examples of extraordinary tenacity and courage in the pursuit of knowledge and the fashioning of a full and vigorous life. One individual fills in an *Intensive Questionnaire* about himself, writing the answers as if they were about another person. He is an engine tender in large works, living in a six-roomed tenement with wife and one child. One of a family of eight, the child of a labourer, at the age of eleven he became a baker's boy at week-ends for 1s. 3d. per week. Later he is an errand boy, a machinist, flung out of work by bad trade, and an engine cleaner on a railway at 15s. a week. He remembers suffering acutely from hunger during the colliers' strike of twenty years ago, and until the last few years he has lived below rather than above the poverty line. "He lived in what was practically a slum district, and although his house was always scrupulously clean, it was always poverty-stricken, having no good pictures, no bound books, no music, no garden, no bathroom." Before nineteen he was a local preacher. Then he taught himself English Grammar, Logic, and Political Economy. Now at the age of twenty-seven he is a "pronounced Socialist." "The thing above all others," he quietly declares, "that has characterised the life of this particular X from the very beginning has been 'Poverty.' Always he has had to earn as much as he could without regard to his future welfare or culture or education or refinement. His meagre wages were always needed to subsidise the family income during his adolescence and early manhood." This man "believes his home the finest place in the world." He asks for "100 pages" to explain why he voted Labour. He is



deeply interested in local politics. He thinks that "there is no place like Sheffield." He believes in Home Rule all round. He defines Protection as "a Capitalist dodge to create monopolies for their own clique" and Socialism as "the only means of establishing the 'Kingdom of God' on earth." He believes in Fisher's Bill as an instalment, and thinks "the King ought to be superseded by a President." (The lack of enthusiasm for the Monarchy is one of the outstanding and perhaps rather unfair features of these "well-equipped" workers, but they have a traditional idea of a rather luxurious Court, and a traditional idea of an austere President seeking the public good only. They seem to have a pathetic inability to realise that the President of a Republic or even the Prime Minister of a Constitutional Monarchy may become as undemocratic, as surrounded by parasites and as indifferent to the general welfare as any of the old kings.)

He reads thoroughly the *Daily News*, the *Sheffield Independent*, the *Herald*, the *Sunday Chronicle* and the *New Statesman*. His hobbies are reading, gardening, walking in the country, theatre going and (occasionally) a music hall. He is fond of music of all sorts. His favourite songs include "England Arise," "Lead, Kindly Light," "Abide with Me," and "any decent glee-song—no rag-times." He is extending his library on the plan laid down by Arnold Bennett in his book *Literary Taste*. He has read the poetry of Tennyson, Pope, Masfield, the Bible, Shakespeare. He has read most of G. K. Chesterton, Dickens, Shaw, about a dozen of Wells' books, about a score of Arnold Bennett's. He says Virgil was a Greek poet, doesn't know whether Dante was a painter or a writer, and has read Plato's *Republic*. His favourite male character in fiction is David Rossi (of *The Eternal City*), in real life, E. D. Morel. He is "losing patience with the churches." He has forsaken everything in the nature of dogma or creed; he is "coming to the opinion" that the something we call God is still trying to realise Himself through humanity.

This is but one type out of many. He is still an "unskilled" machine-minder. It is well that his type should be studied, understood, satisfied; for upon its ideals and actions the future of this country depends.

## VI

Further light is thrown on the literary aspirations of Labour by the record given to me of a visitor to a soldiers' hospital on behalf of the War Libraries.

"The War Libraries put a collection of books in every ward, and a bigger collection in the indefinite district known as 'downstairs.' These were brought to the men by voluntary workers (Sister is much too busy). It was friendly work. You came into the ward with your bale of picture-papers and a distinct access of cheerfulness became visible. You distributed them as fairly as you could; there was no need to urge the men to pass them on. The picture-papers broke the ice and led up to the question 'Would you like a book to read?' The negative answers of course came in due proportion. 'My head is too bad, thank you, I think I'll just look at the pictures.' Once I met a man absolutely illiterate, and plenty who were 'no scholar.' But when the answer was 'Well, thank you, yes, I think I should,' one's function began. Generally the demand was for 'a story' or 'an adventure story.' 'Any sort of story so long as there is some love in it,' one man said; others asked for 'a sea story,' 'a story about the French Revolution,' 'not about the war, please.' In the matter of taste the Army did not differ from the general public, which likes its fiction sugary. Two or three men had special authors; one was reading all H. G. Wells, another all George Gissing ('because I am feeling fed up'); another Dickens. But lest you leap to unwarranted conclusions, I hasten to add that two more were devouring the works of Baroness Orczy and Mr. Charles Garvice (beginning with *Gold in the Gutter*). I confess to

acquiring a friendly feeling for authors for whom I had not previously entertained it, just because they were 'unreal,' because never by even the most devious route would they lead these men back to a Flanders trench or the worries of the future.

" 'By ways no gaze could follow, a course unspoiled of Cook,  
Per Fancy, fleetest in man, our titled births we took,  
With maids of matchless beauty and parentage unguessed,  
And a Church of England parson, for the Islands of the Blest.' "

They wanted forgetfulness, and surely they had earned the right to it. Some desired or did not desire a romance, *i.e.* a story frankly impossible with a slight element of the supernatural, like *The Sorrows of Satan*. Some of course differed from this position widely. Men getting better and expecting their discharge into civil life often wanted hand-books on trades or professions. One man wanted a book on theosophy and one the biography of 'Dates' 'for some dates I was arguing about.' One fine old man, 'an old contemptible,' said: 'I'm no fiction reader—never was as a boy. Biography and history is what I like.' Another, a very young boy, asked for 'A Life of Lord Kitchener or Mr. Gladstone or President Garfield, or if you haven't those, then a life of the Russian Royal Family.' A man who had been in Mesopotamia was very interested in Miss Jebb's *By Desert Ways to Baghdad*. Another, who had been in India, devoured the lives of the Lawrences; another, 'something about America.'

"One asked persistently for *Robbery under Arms*, which he had begun in another hospital and was unable to finish there. One begged for Mark Twain. But Mr. Nat Gould, Sexton Blake, and Charles Garvice occupied most of the field.' 'There was a man in that hospital,' a woman told me in the intervals of scrubbing a floor, 'and he went blind.' And his girl she chucked him.' Pause to scrub. 'And there's men that does the girls down proper too.' Another pause, and the speaker rose and took up

her bucket, 'Well, I suppose it all happens for a good purpose.' "

Another example of a thirst for knowledge which may obtain in a general labourer, a Londoner, formerly a sailor who had served as a soldier through the war, can be cited from my own personal experience. He had read some Tolstoi (*Anna Karenina*), and a good deal of history. He borrowed from me at different times Ludendorff's *Memoirs*, *At the Works*, by Lady Bell, and various political productions, in each case his own choice. He is very interested in pictures, and able to recognise at sight the work of many modern artists. He belongs to the Labour Party, but is having disputes with his own Trades Union about their attitude to the returned soldier. He believes in nationalisation of land, defined as the State as landlord letting out small holdings. "If the French and the Chinese can live on the land, why can't we?" "Can't do with" either poetry or religion. "Believes it will be all right if a man does his duty." Intends his two little girls to be teachers. "That seems to me the most useful work for a girl. I wanted them to do nursing but they did not take to it." Another, a french polisher, read little but fairy tales "in order to tell them to the youngsters."

This is England; the essential heart and core of it; and it is by the ideas and energy of this England that the British Empire will stand or fall. Meantime there remains after a war in which classes should have learnt to understand each other, a greater cleavage of class than has existed for half a century; wars and rumours of wars, strikes and rumours of strikes, and the fatuous belief that any such upheaval is inspired by "Bolshevist money," and on the verge of massacring people of wealth and position. I remember attending a great meeting at the Albert Hall, in which, after six days of the strike of the railway men, when the Prime Minister had branded them as Bolshevik, and most of the newspapers had exhausted every epithet of vituperation upon their heads, a settlement had been arranged. The West End was scared out of its life by this great intrusion of

railwaymen, and all the approaches were protected by policemen who seemed to be more numerous than all the force in London. Outside you found fear, hatred, ignorance; inside you found—England.

Crowds were waiting long before the doors were opened. An hour before the meeting began they swept into the building. They were pleasantly and naturally polite. Once or twice hitches occurred through doors being locked, or suddenly opened, which in the ordinary audience might have caused nasty rushes. Here it was a case of "You first, please." They would not even swarm from box to box, stepping over the partitions, in order to get front seats, until encouraged to do so. The crowded hall, in diminished light, presented a remarkable spectacle. It seemed less a gathering of workers than of families. The wives were there. So were considerable numbers of children. Everybody was well dressed. Here were Sunday suits in evidence; in many cases extra Sunday suits—wedding suits. There were quite a number of jolly, good-looking boys. One supposes they were the van boys or the "cleaners" who had been the subject of so much controversy. Nicely dressed, with white shirts and black coats, they might have been boys come down for the day from Harrow or Shrewsbury or Dulwich. The older men looked comfortable and benign. Some of them puffed away thoughtfully at their pipes. Most of the audience were not smoking at all. The young men looked quiet and sensible. All wore the red rosette flowers which were being sold for the railwaymen's orphanages. The atmosphere was subdued. It resembled that of a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. The East End had come to the West, and dressed for the occasion.

The hour of waiting was spent for the most part in silence. There was none of that hum of conversation which distinguishes a concert hall audience before a political or musical gathering. The tone was neither exuberant nor mournful. One could detect a certain amount of anxiety—to hear the terms of settlement; with, I think,

undoubted satisfaction that a settlement had been obtained. Cheerful calls by lively "comrades" produced a very limited response. "Are we downhearted?"—the commonest, evoked, after the *n*th repetition, scarcely an audible answering denial. "Boos" were called for the Prime Minister and the Geddeses, but they were given without any appearance of anger. (Explanation might be found by the statement seriously delivered to me by an intelligent working woman, "One of them Geddeses has a German wife, and it's she puts 'im up to it.") It was as different from a political or Socialist meeting in the same hall as one could imagine. No audience ever looked less like the "working man" depicted in the *Daily Herald*. It looked perhaps less like the "working man" depicted in the *Morning Post*. But then the working man depicted in the *Morning Post* is an imperfect deduction from the *Daily Herald*. The *Herald* placards were scattered about and occasionally an enthusiast called for cheers.

There were intervals of almost complete silence between the songs and hymns. On a lady arriving late in the box where I was sitting, all the men rose up to offer her their seats. I asked one behind me if the strike was settled. He said: "Yes." I asked him on what terms. He did not know the terms. "We have beaten the Government," he said. "That's all I care about." Later in the evening, when the terms were announced, his enthusiasm was tempered. The organist played the accepted revolutionary songs. He was aided by a man vigorously playing the cornet at the top of the gallery. We had "England Arise" and "When wilt Thou save the People?" and the Russian National Anthem, and "The Marseillaise." Only a few attempted to join in. The words were evidently unknown to the general. Every ten minutes the organist fell back on the dismal, damp harmonies of the "Red Flag." When the organist was not playing it, he was giving us selections from his repertoire. He played "Good King Wenceslaus." He played "Three Blind Mice." Some of the audience recognised the latter,

and, seeing an allusion to Mr. Lloyd George and the Geddeses, laughed and cheered. Cornet in the gallery, getting restive, played a line of a familiar hymn tune. One expected to hear the first line of "Sun of my Soul, Thou Saviour dear." Instead of which, they broke into a low chant (the tune is a mournful one) "Are we Downhearted?—No—No—No"—repeated four times, with varying intonations, to each verse. Cornet, stimulated to greater effort, broke into the first bars of "Tipperary." The organ took up "Tipperary." The whole audience sang "Tipperary." They encored themselves, and sang "Tipperary" again. Then they sang "Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit-bag and Smile—Smile—Smile." Then they sang some song of pleasant sadness with the refrain "You'll be sorry that you made me cry." This plaintive number was, however interrupted by the entrance of the men's leaders. The organ switched off into the "Red Flag."

Two sentiments evoked continual applause. They were uttered many times by each speaker. Whenever expressed, they produced responsive cheers. The one was praise of the "solidarity" of the railwaymen—their loyalty to each other. The other was the statement that in the strike they had been fighting the battle against reduction of wages for all the working classes of the country. For comradeship and union amongst themselves; through such comradeship to fight for helping others; these are the "two great commandments" of the Labour movement, amongst such a moderate, conservative force as the London railwaymen. Sustained by the conviction that they had been true to these fundamental obligations, the great meeting quietly dispersed into the night. The "Railway Strike" was over.

## VII

And after all what great gentlemen they are, the working population of the cities, even if reluctantly classified as "unequipped!" How different from the sullen rural

population you sometimes find in other lands ! How quick in response ! How lively in humour ! How strong in patience ; above all, with the fundamental virtue of comradeship. You look at these vast masses where they assemble to see, say, football matches, appearing how drab and dingy in ill-cut garments, and there are some who feel almost afraid at gazing at such a crowd, with numbers equal to two or three divisions of the British Army ; who, if they chose, might sweep away the police, tear down the barriers, burn, rob, loot, slay, with nothing to prevent them. As a matter of fact when you are among the crowd itself, you find them extraordinarily good-natured, good-tempered and friendly, and although they may hoot a referee's decision, or vocally denounce what they regard as " dirty play," there is nothing of the blind fury which animates the devotees of other sports in other lands. I have seen a spectator fainting in the midst of such a contest, and men who had never seen him before set themselves to apply remedies and encourage him with pleasant phrases and even carry him out, losing the sport for which they had paid from an exiguous income. I remember a huge mob waiting after a match on an underground railway station to fling themselves into the narrow entrance of a tube railway, and suddenly a cry of " lady " going up, and the men flinging themselves back on the crowd behind while a passage was made for a girl to alight, followed then by the usual free fight for entrance through a tiny opening. In a tube or omnibus the workman is the first to stand to let the woman sit down, and often receives no thanks for his pains. So many of them are content with such simple pleasures ; visits to the parks with their children ; or a journey to Kew Gardens ; and you may see them in the processions carrying their children on their shoulders, while banners of Friendly Societies or Trades Unions proclaim the affection of God for the common people. When they supported me in East London, they used to march in dingy garments in solemn procession, singing songs indicative of comradeship : •



## ENGLAND AFTER WAR

" Fall in and follow me,  
 Fall in and follow me,  
 Never mind at all about the weather  
     All together  
 " Fall in and follow me,  
 Fall in and follow me,  
 You do as I do and you'll do right,  
     Fall in and follow me."

When the Socialist orators came, thin-lipped, passionate, consumptive-looking men, declaiming bitter statements concerning Society, they used solemnly to chant "Tell me the old, old story," or pull the soap-boxes from under the feet of the speakers. They all lived in cramped, mostly in overcrowded, homes. They had no protection, beyond a week's notice, from semi-starvation. They had mostly strong family affection. And even when in striking their action was obviously mistaken, it could generally be traced to some obscure idea that they were helping each other. I do not envy the Englishman who has no pride in the working classes of England.

In the war the men who remained at home subscribed large to alien charities, such as the working men of one industrial city who every Saturday contributed to Belgian Relief or Serbian Relief many hundreds of pounds. How little personal hostility appeared to the *bourgeoisie* or the idle rich! How confident anyone can be of receiving courteous reply to an inquiry! How little, on the whole, they demand from life, and how little life gives them. It is this store of strength and patience which makes us still proud of the people of England. In the chaos of the retreat of Caporetto, when whole armies were fleeing in panic, I was told of the batteries of British artillerymen getting away their guns. Nothing would induce them to leave them. Nothing shook their indomitable determination to get them out, or their certainty that they would do so, or checked the steady flow of humorous "grousing," or prevented them picking up refugee children and putting them on the gun carriages. When placed in occupation of enemy territory, "nothing," says an observer, "will

prevent the British soldier calling the woman in his billet 'Ma' or helping her with her washing." "Fritz is my pal," observed a wounded soldier of a prisoner; "I jabbed 'im in the eye and 'e jabbed me in the arm. Come along, Fritz, old son." An elderly Belgian woman refugee, bewildered and a little crazy, crammed herself into an already overcrowded railway carriage, observing at intervals, like a minute-gun, "Droitwich, Droitwich." At every station the working-men occupants—some soldiers—shook slow heads and shouted monosyllables calculated to encourage the foreigner. When Droitwich was reached, they handed out her parcels, extracting them from between their feet and behind their backs, with mooing sounds of congratulation. When the train moved off they all observed, "Foreign. A bit touched," and returned to their several newspapers. When I was in charge of the Mines Department at the Home Office, two serious explosions took place in which hundreds of lives were lost. The scenes at the pit heads consisted of almost frantic fights between the policemen and the escaped colliers, fiercely resolved to go down to nearly certain death in the hope of saving their comrades. And when it became possible to let any essay the attempt at rescue, there was another fight between the colliers themselves, as to which should obtain the dangerous task.

"You see, sir," said a British Tommy to an astonished English journalist, "these Germans aren't a military race like we are." And a military, though not a militarist nation, English Labour remains to-day, so easily led if properly guided, into the ways that make for the welfare of the world.

A certain labourer, over seventy years old, had five sons, all soldiers fighting in this war. "The last of us came home on Christmas Eve," said one of them who told me. "And my father, he said, 'I saw you all go out, and I've seen you all come home, and now I'm going home to bed, and I don't think I shall get up again.' And he went home, and in twenty-four hours he was dead."

*“ Bake ye the big world all again  
A cake with kindly leaven ;  
Yet these are sorry evermore—  
Unless there be a little door,  
A little door in heaven.”*

G. K. CHESTERTON.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RETURN OF THE ABYSS

THE war was a "good time" for a great proportion of the working people, including, above all, the women and children. If the wage-earner was working in a home factory or workshop, he could often earn prodigious wages—although at the expense of the wearing out of the human machine. The girls and the boys were all working also, the former in many cases receiving 20s. to 30s. a week instead of the 5s. or 6s. of pre-war days. In the average family the income soared far above the increase of prices, and none of the family need ever be unemployed.

A visitor endeavoured to persuade an old workman, a "pivotal" man, to work the full week instead of four days as he was doing. He had doubled his income even with that amount of work. He refused to work extra, or to raise his standard of living, and at the end of every week gave away the surplus, over his previous income, having no use for it. He had no object in saving and no desire to spend. I should regard this story as incredible if I had not had it on unimpeachable authority.

#### I

Women and children who were dependent on the soldiers received in separation allowances often much more than they had ever had paid to them to keep the home going, and without the cost of maintaining the breadwinner. The results became apparent as the years went by. I remember revisiting the region in South London where I once lived for nine years, which was then not far

different from a concentrated slum. The place looked even forlorn than when I resided there, for repairs had ceased, and the Council had become indifferent to the sedulous cleansing of the streets, and torn paper and the débris of human existence occupied the narrow alleys between houses which looked as if at any moment they might collapse in ruins. The only distinction were the coloured cards put out in nearly every alternate house, showing that from each particular hovel some man had gone out to fight for his country; and it was to this "England" that he would return. But, on the other hand, the effect of the money that was pouring in was everywhere noticeable. The children were well fed, well dressed, well shod. The girls were adorned with cheap finery. The mothers were less careworn and could pay more attention to the children. And this same result was being obtained all over the country. "Families that were my despair before," said a medical officer of health, "are now clean and well cared for." That swamp of forlorn humanity round Dockland, Bermondsey, Wapping, South-West Ham, found itself for the first time well fed, and with good feeding came health and a new chance for the coming generations. Except for anxiety for those at the Front, many would have wished these conditions to continue for ever.

It continued for nearly two years after the war. Its effects may continue for an indefinite time. For the first time for many decades the children of the poorest for seven years—say from three years old till ten—have had enough to eat. That should make a permanent difference to a whole generation. It is a pity that the length of the experiment could not have been continued longer and the world confronted with a new race who, from birth until the age (say) of fourteen, had never suffered from hunger. Perhaps, had such a thing happened, the whole future of England would have been changed: and the permanently inefficient and the partially unemployable, and all that mass of low-grade life which is never quite healthy and consequently never quite happy, which now coagulates in

certain congested areas in the great cities, would have been altogether broken up and have disappeared. That would be a legacy which could be bequeathed with hope and pride to those who, after our passing, will be paying the huge interest on the debt of almost unimaginable dimensions which is all we are leaving them at present.

But some year and a half after the war, the whole thing came to an end, like the sudden stopping of a clock. Through world reactions over which they had no control, who live in courts and streets where the sun never rises, the inhabitants of these secluded regions suddenly found that no one had any need for their services; that no one at least was prepared to pay for their services. They all fell in a heap into the abyss. And in that abyss they sojourn to this day. Nor have the wise men who control the courses of the world any clear idea of how, if at all, they are to be got out again. They are kept alive by "dole" from the Government, issued by the Labour Exchanges. The continuance of the "dole" is dependent on the recipient doing no work. Small wonder that in a few weeks apathy settles down on those who thus receive, if only a little, for nothing, and that semi-starvation as a certainty in idleness is preferred to laborious effort for no substantially greater wage. Others have money or groceries flung at them by the Boards of Guardians, who profess, and rightly, that amongst the thousands of applicants they are utterly unable to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving. "Until the new Act revising the unemployment dole from the Labour Exchanges came into force," writes one of the best known of women workers, "and reduced the numbers applying to us for relief, we were spending on the Wandsworth" (not a particularly poor Union in normal times) "Board of Guardians each week about £5000 in doles, affecting over 13,000 persons. The numbers are so vast we can only give relief by rule of thumb. A skilled engineer who has never been out of work in his life stands before us with hunted, puzzled eyes, gratefully and courteously acknowledging the help

given him by the community, a sum piteously inadequate, judged by his usual healthy, wholesome standard of life. The next man, a confirmed public-house loafer, or well-known hawker, shuffles suspiciously in, or tells a rapid story, fluent and vague. The dole is more than he is used to earning, and his wife would feel herself well off if it could reach her intact. Alas, we can only deal with 'the head of the family,' and little but the grocery ticket may reach the home.

"One after another, sullen young men tramp across the room. Some have ribbons; all have been in the Army. The Army took them at eighteen as casual boy workers, van boys, newspaper boys, unskilled labourers; and now the Army has released them, and they are looking for a job—men with men's expenses and only a boy's training or experience as regards civilian life and work. It is so easy to cry 'Bolshevism' and close our eyes to the root causes of the trouble and unrest.

"As soldiers, drilled and shepherded from morning to night, fed, clothed, housed, fêted, and supplied with woollen gifts and cigarettes, and sometimes with allowances to dependent mother or girl-wife, they had none of the responsibilities of the civilian, and are now only dazed and confused in the struggle for existence. It doesn't seem fair to them. They cannot understand that a man may find his niche far more easily in war than in peace.

"These are the real dangers as regards revolution, not the older men in skilled trades hanging on stolidly in bad times, looking for the revival of trade and industry. More shame," she adds, "to the civilisation of the New World."<sup>1</sup>

"Go teach the orphan boy to read; Go, teach the orphan girl to sew," cried Tennyson to Lady Clara Vere de Vere, in the remote and despised Victorian days. Lady Clara Vere de Vere, in this more enlightened time, is either earning a huge fortune on the movies, or learning shorthand and typewriting to become independent of the family

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Corbett Ashby in the *Westminster Gazette*, 31 Spring 1922.

estate. But, in such distress, other classes can still harden their hearts because the plumber will not plumb or the unemployed working girl will not become an employed domestic servant. Mrs. Corbett Ashby has something to say on both indictments :

“ Last week a clerk to a company came before us, and we have clerks and accountants, draughtsmen, engineers, fitters, bootmakers, tailors. All and every trade is represented ; men speaking several languages and of good education. What a difference it would make to them if, instead of the dole they hate, they could proudly feel they were helping the children to a better future.” To all of which, all the intelligence and power of English organised Government can merely pass by on the other side, or give the twopence of the good Samaritan without his guarantee of repetition. And as to the girl, whether orphan or otherwise, it would be well for those who theorise so glibly to be confronted with actual realities.

“ I am constantly abused because while there are no domestic servants we give grants to out-of-work girls. I am not a registry office, and hope the L.C.C. will not fine me if I offer to any lady looking for domestic help the following treasures :

“ (a) Now sixteen. Worked at wood-chopping since she left school on lowest possible standard. The only cooking she has seen has been done on a small open grate in one pan ; she does not know the names of more than a quarter of our household goods. Her language, even when good-tempered, is incomprehensible, and she has never been under discipline in her life.

“ (b) Has gone from school to a rough laundry whose older workers bear none too good a character.

“ (c) Has been folding envelopes or packing sweets. White-faced and puny, how could she run up and down stairs from a basement kitchen with coals and trays, lift heavy saucepans or wheel a pram ?”



"The truth is that the girls fit for service are for the most part absorbed into it; the rest are unsuited to any house with old people or young children. It would be an act of real social service for a lady to come forward and offer to take one.

"Let us take the child out of the labour market and educate it so that temporary unemployment may be to it and to the community a blessing, not a curse."

At first there were fighting demonstrations. Mobs of hundreds or thousands would invade the office of the *Guardians*, and unknown leaders would exhibit their pitiful condition. Great processions would march through the streets, inflamed by ex-soldiers ("heroes") playing bands or bearing banners. There was even a time when rich men trembled, fearing that the heroes might take the law into their own hands. Public offices were seized and occupied, and men gazed towards the darkened and crowded Labour cities of East and South London with something of the spirit in which men in Paris once gazed eastward towards the Faubourg St. Antoine--not knowing what sudden resolute and implacable forces might appear from there at midnight, or cock crow, or in the morning. But the immense outpouring of "doles," so cleverly adjusted as to keep life together in semi-starvation, and thus both weakening the powers of aggression and rendering the risk of life and liberty just not worth while, caused these demonstrations to cease. Apathy gradually corroded the forces of disorder. Men and women were content to live on these mean sums in idleness, while their working powers steadily degenerated, and the will-to-work in order to obtain a higher standard became atrophied. A few of the more enterprising took to barrel organs and brass bands, and men with fighting medals could thus be seen in West End thoroughfares, pitifully soliciting the alms of the wealthy who had stayed at home. But for the most part the West End remained undisturbed, to brood over the reduction of its possessions by a taxation and rating brigandage which it regarded as intolerable. With so conspicuous

an object for pity in itself, but little compassion could overflow to the regions which once it was at least concerned with, which seem likely to return again to the kingdom of night and its despairs.

## II

Twenty years ago, when I first entered public life, no subject was more compelling in driving me towards it than the subject of the homes of the people. I perhaps judged too unfairly from personal experience in London the condition of the remainder of the country. But in the labour cities of London the people were literally being choked in the swarm, and children perishing because they had "no room to live." This excess of demand over supply was not only injurious to health and a direct creator of immorality and discomfort : it also reacted on those who were able to afford the elements of decency and civilised existence. For the landlords, with long waiting lists and the opportunity of "key" money whenever a fresh tenant came, cared nothing for the condition of the tenements and cottages which could be so easily let. The block dwelling in which I lived, with four rooms at 9s. 6d. a week, was infested with vermin, which, despite the fact that we lived austere, without carpets or rugs or sofas or arm-chairs, we were never able completely to destroy. The sanitary arrangements were sometimes indescribable, and the general condition of this human hive impossible for any family with young children.

It was only when the L.C.C. electrified tram system broke the barriers of the enormous city, and the speculative builder plastered fresh towns to encircle and still more to stifle the inner heart of London, that relief was obtained. The people began to move out to the new coagulations of red-bricked cottages. "Whenever I see a boy that seems shaping for a speaker, his father moves to Walthamstow," said a Bethnal Green supporter of mine sadly. The slum landlords were amazed to find houses and rooms standing empty, and were compelled to paint and clean and repair

in order to attract fresh tenants. The problem was transferred to one of control of this vast expansion, and we passed the Town Planning Act in order that these new cities should not sink into the condition of the old. It remained, however, a dead letter on the Statute Book: with the consequence that the huge arterial roads which might have struck out north, south, east and west, and the "green belt" which might have completely surrounded the older London with parks and playing fields, are to-day non-existent. While too many of these hastily run-up and hastily sold jerry-built structures are already falling back into the condition of the slum.

No building of workmen's houses was done during the war. The pressure was not felt until the millions of men returned from overseas. They returned to find the old problem of twenty years ago intensified. There was for the "heroes" no room to live.

Four years ago the Government computed that four hundred thousand new houses were required for the population which had grown during so many years of quiescence in building: and this quite apart from an additional indefinite number required to replace houses which in these years had fallen into ruins and become unfit for human habitation. The four years have passed, and even the four hundred thousand are still to seek: while the population continues to multiply, and the "heroes" desire marriage and, be it ever so humble, a home.

A Minister of the Government, perhaps courageously, probably incautiously and certainly misinformed, told an astonished people that the effective demand for house room in England had dropped. An immense hubbub of protest arose. It was demonstrated beyond denial that not only were the very poor living in unimaginable squalor, but that also numbers with substantial incomes were tormented by the impossibility of obtaining any reasonable shelter for themselves and their families.

Some examples, out of hundreds who took the trouble to write to the newspapers, may illustrate the condition

of England, in this matter, at this moment. It is not confined to the historic centres of the "one-roomed tenement that took in lodgers." It comes from every part of the land. This, for example, from Manchester, signed by some twenty "victims." "We, the undersigned, urge that Sir Alfred Mond should immediately withdraw his erroneous and ridiculous statement that 'there has been a big drop in the demand for houses' and face the facts. During the last three years the demand has increased, and it will continue to increase. The shortage is a national scandal. It is undermining the morals of the thousands who are its victims. It is sowing the seed of a C 3 nation. *We want houses.*" Or here, three cases brought before the Board of Guardians at Swansea: "When a man asked the Guardians to house his three motherless children, as he had no home, he stated that he had been turned out from a house because the landlord objected to apartments. Another man told the Committee that he paid 33s. a week for one room. Dr. Lloyd Edwards said that he was recently in a house where there were seven or eight families. The house in normal times would fetch about £45 annually. The landlord now made about £400 a year."

"Ask those who pay out the Cash benefits," says a Sickness Visitor under the Health Insurance Scheme. "They will tell you that the families who most frequently claim for sickness are the most overcrowded at home. They cannot sleep, or wash properly, or breathe any but impure air. No wonder they fall ill."

Here is a distressful experience, one is afraid typical of many. "I was married in December 1920. We were promised a house, but the landlord let it to his son. I had to live at my husband's mother's, and, to my shame, my husband and myself had to share a bedroom with his mother and a grandson of nearly twelve. It was impossible to rent a house. I had to go home eventually, as the life was killing me. I felt absolutely ashamed. During the time I was at home my husband came to see me once a fortnight.

That meant £1, 1s. in fares. Eventually my husband got desperate and borrowed money with which to buy a house. By the time we have paid the money back we shall have paid about three times the actual price. How to make ends meet worries me from morning to night."

A manager who is superintending the erection of small houses for an Urban District Council testifies: "There are about five hundred applications on the books. Some of these applicants have, to my knowledge, been seeking houses for three years without success. New applicants are calling upon me daily. One of these begged me to-day to try to get his case considered. He and his wife and four children are living in two small rooms in a six-roomed cottage. Two other families occupy the remaining four rooms. This is one instance only of many others personally known to me."

And—lest the reader get weary of indefinite multiplication of such evidence—let me add but one more example, more poignant than others, perhaps, as revealing how we are treating the "men who saved the Empire," and those whom the dead have bequeathed as a solemn trust for the living. Here is a case where the testimony is in open Court and all the facts certified by the Council's Surveyor. "Tenants of two condemned houses were summoned for 'failing to cease to occupy them.' It was stated that 'the Council had brought the case with reluctance because they realised the difficulty of securing other premises.'" Here is the description by the Council's Surveyor of the houses that the tenants refused to leave: "The two places were falling apart. At the back the main walls had broken away to a matter of several inches, which had broken the roof, causing the water to pour in every time it rained. The floors were quite out of level, and he could see daylight through the front door. In walking across one of the upper rooms one of the ceilings had fallen, and most of the other ceilings were down. The houses might fall down at any time. One of the houses was occupied by an ex-service man with his wife and four

children; the other by a war widow with two children. When it was suggested in Court that if they could find no other accommodation they must go into the workhouse, they protested in this way:

"W. D. GIRT (ex-service man): 'They didn't say that when they wanted us for the army.'

"Mrs. AMY DENTON (war widow): 'It isn't very nice to go to the workhouse when I lost my husband in the war.'"

And all the time in Whitehall the flags of England wave above the perpetual garden of flowers, wreaths and crosses, in memory of "The Glorious Dead"; and in the great Abbey, amongst the tombs of Kings, stands the inscription upon the grave of "the Unknown Warrior," stating that he fought and died for his "home."

### III

And no picture of the condition of England would be complete without some reminder of the life which steadily experiences all the miseries of poverty—life lived on the margin of subsistence, in the darkness which surrounds the basis of Society. So long as that life endures, with its disabilities, and breeds a similar life to its own, and rears up the potential criminal and the potential unemployable, for so long all the proud boasts of England's Empire will sound a little brassy, a little thin. Once more, as twenty years ago, the call is to a crusade to redeem a substantial minority of the race from conditions worse than chattel slavery. These have no comparison with the life of the well-paid artisan, and are not substantially affected by the variations in unemployment. Such variations may hurl others into the lowest depths of the abyss; but, for those who perpetually dwell in it, they have not much more effect than the great tides and tempests on the sea surface have on the cold, dead calm 500 fathoms below. Ill-nourished children, prematurely sent to "work" as paper boys, office boys, or in some other "blind-alley" occupation,

grow up physically or mentally unfit, to reproduce another generation similarly divorced from the sunlight and all good things. This particular class—*La Misère*—coagulate in the great cities. They are not peculiar to England. Bad housing and malnutrition and at times specific disease produce a type that can only be badly housed and undernourished and suffer from specific disease. In the day of England's wealth we could "carry" this class—by poor relief, or liberal charity through the churches or some other methods of maintaining a family parasitic on the general body of workers. But in the day of England's poverty, when the normal workers are in desperate plight, the expenditure on the maintenance of this class is as direct an economic "waste" or burden, as the money spent, say, on attacking Russia, or the interest which we have to pay on foreign investments. We cannot afford in the "new world" to maintain the "slum."

From a thousand possible testimonies I give the experience of a health visitor at Birmingham. And I give it only in order that I may not be accused of neglecting the inclusion of a life of English citizens, which the bulk of the newspapers and even the publicists concerned with popular opinion seem only anxious to avoid.

"It was a class with forty boys in one of Birmingham's slum schools—in many of whose faces the drawn look of hunger or under-feeding was all too plainly to be seen—whom I asked to tell me what they had had for dinner yesterday. There were not ten out of the forty who would admit that they had not had enough to eat. 'Two pieces with marge; no, I couldn't have eaten more, thank you,' said one. 'How many of your mothers had to go short of food themselves to give you something for dinner to-day?' I asked, and thirty hands at once went up. A boy in a younger class said that he had had 'two pieces and an 'apenny' for his dinner. 'And I bought a carrot with the 'apenny,' he explained.

"'Raw carrots and raw swedes form a very large item in the diet of some of these children,' said a teacher. 'Many

a meal is "made out" with one or other of them. If only they could be washed before being eaten it wouldn't be so bad, but they seldom are.'

" 'We've got no fire, and not very much to eat,' confessed a boy of thirteen, whom I picked out because of his white face and half-starved look. 'You see, Father got sacked ten days ago—he's a riveter; and Mother's been out of work for a fortnight. Grandma has sent us three loaves a day—there's my little brother of seven and me, besides Father and Mother—but now last night Grandfather got sacked. Grandma's working part time as a japanner—she is on four days a week, beginning at nine; and there's my Auntie at work—she's only fifteen. But when we have no coal, Grandma makes stew for us on her fire, and she always gets us some bread.'

" 'It drives you fair mad to have the kiddies asking you for food, and you with nothing to give them. You can't make a child understand,' said one mother, who declared she was better off than many. 'Going hungry yourself is nothing if you don't have to say "no" to them.'

" 'Will you go and see Mrs. J——? Her husband's been out of work fourteen weeks, and there's five of them starving on fifteen shillings a week,' I was told, and I found it all too true. It was a beautifully clean home, and the children—of six, four and six months—were charming. Mrs. J——, a young woman of twenty-six, had, as the neighbours said, 'gone away almost to a skeleton' through sheer starvation. Though she was nursing her baby, I found that all the food she herself had had yesterday was a cup of tea at breakfast-time, and tea and two slices of bread and butter, provided by a married sister living near, at tea-time. She was trembling with exhaustion, and almost too weak to talk. The financial position of the family was even worse than I had been told. From the husband's 'unemployment pay' of £1, five shillings a week had to go to pay off a debt, six shillings and threepence for rent, and only eight shillings and ninepence was left for food and fire. A school dinner for the eldest child was divided

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with his four-year-old brother every day, and saved them from utter starvation.

" 'Their father goes out every day to the market or somewhere,' said the poor mother, 'to see if there's any way to earn a few coppers. He brought in fourpence last night and he said, "Oh, I could eat and eat," but nothing would make him take it from the kiddies. He's always been a good father to them. I never saw him for two and a half years while he was at the war in Mesopotamia—and now to come back to this! ' "

England, four years after the greatest victory ever seen, when flags flew from every house and the sound of cannon betokened the universal triumph! "Oh tell me all about the war, and what they fought each other for." "Oh, that I cannot tell," said he, "but 'twas a famous victory."

"When Mounseer lay in Quiberon Bay  
You sent us beef and beer,  
Now Mounseer's beat, we've nought to eat  
Because you've nought to fear."

The inflammation to volunteering, the praise of the soldier, the promises that the nation would never forget him or his dependants, "the long fight in the sodden fields," the years of danger, discomfort, wounds, disease and extremity of pain have all gone; and we are left with these pictures, in order that our humanity and civilisation may be recognised by future generations.

#### IV

And lest there should be any doubt as to the necessity of these people continuing to live in a life of poverty, more harassing and degrading than that of savage tribes, I may provide the statistics of the national revenue of England as stated in the last published Blue Book—the 64th report of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Inland Revenue. Here, for example, are figures giving the number of incomes between various limits, not of Companies or Co-operative

Societies, but of individuals, of a year ago; figures which seem to show that the country is not entirely sunk into a mass of semi-paupers, clutching greedily for spoil and the means to live.

Income Exceeding	Not Exceeding	Number of Individuals.
£	£	
2,000	5,000	46,886
5,000	10,000	15,904
10,000	15,000	4,502
15,000	20,000	1,914
20,000	25,000	940
25,000	30,000	605
30,000	40,000	646
40,000	50,000	358
50,000	75,000	335
75,000	100,000	126
100,000	—	169

This gives a total of 72,000 persons with incomes exceeding £2000 a year. It gives a total of 169 persons with incomes exceeding £100,000 a year each. One wonders whether the majority of these 169 are either terrified at the possible loss of their wealth by a working class uprising, or grumbling at the tax which is laid upon them, especially for education and medical relief of their poorest fellow-citizens, or denouncing the demands of labour and the laziness and incompetence of the British working man.

Anyhow, but for that "working man," they would now be paying reparations to a triumphant Germany which had won the war, instead of sitting secure, however great the taxation the country demands of them, with the possibilities of every conceivable enjoyment of money or power that money can give.

*“For the children of this world in their generation are wiser than the children of light.”*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROFITEERS

It is very difficult to estimate the amount of increased wealth made by individuals during the war. In the evidence given before the War Profits Committee by the Inland Revenue officials, some rather startling statements were made as to the probability of an increase in wealth of the whole nation, taken in aggregate, despite the enormous havoc and loss of five years of fighting. But the estimates are taken in a currency value bearing no relation to that of 1914. If that currency value was to rise to the 1914 standard, if, that is to say, the price of commodities were suddenly to become the same as that of 3rd August, eight years ago, the country would be hopelessly bankrupt. For it would be saddled with a national debt, and the payment of an interest on that debt, of about twice the real value which they bear to-day.

But omitting any claim of a general increase in wealth, no one can deny that there has been an enormous change as between individual and individual. The country largely paid for the war from the fall in the price of securities ; so that at one time every man with large accumulated fortune, and every man who had saved a little, found that their fortunes were worth not much more than half what they had expected. At the same time, men of energy and activity, sometimes of humble origin or manipulating great companies, were raking in vast sums of money in shipping enterprises, in the provision of all the variegated food and clothes that the Government was buying for the troops, in the conversion of their own occupations to the making of munitions of war. It is not too much to say

that a substantial proportion, if not the larger part of the wealth of England to-day, is in the hands of the New Rich, or the rich who have enhanced their fortunes through the fact that England was fighting for nearly five years.

I do not want here in any way to pass a moral judgment upon any so-called profiteer. If the spirit of the first few weeks of August and September 1914 could have endured, a man would have considered it as incredible a thing to make a fortune out of the needs of the war as, if of military age and with no conscientious objection, to hide in a cellar in order to escape fighting. But that period of great emotion gradually cooled. I believe it would have been possible almost until the conclusion of the treaty of peace to have taken a large proportion of these war profits for the benefit of the people as a whole, or for repayment of war debt. There was no answer to the parallel of the man who stayed at home and heaped up great fortune, and the man who went abroad and died in swamp or hill or forest, without even bargaining for an adequate support from the nation for his wife and children.

But as the war progressed, business became more and more business; the thoughts of romantic sacrifice were put aside. Each man did what he saw his competitors doing, and tried to do it better, and stayed his conscience by the belief that if he did it efficiently he was doing his "bit" to win the war. And the result has been that while many historic families have been blotted out by death, and others by the loss of possessions due to high taxation or the fall of securities, the war profiteer is for the time triumphant. He purchases titles, he can obtain a safe seat in the House of Commons, he is dominant at the present time in that strange assembly. "I asked," said Mr. Keynes, "a Conservative friend, who had known previous Houses, what he thought of them." "They are a lot of hard-faced men," he said, "who look as if they had done very well out of the war."

One may distinguish, if one pleases, between various types of profiteers. The first type will include those to

whom the war has come as any other secular occurrence, to create a great demand for the products they were making, and therefore a great increase in profits. Such were, for example, many of the brewing companies who found themselves making "Government ale" at a minimum of expense, and whose ordinary shares, practically worthless before the war came, mounted to substantial dimensions. And such were, for example, the makers of treacle and boots and clothing and all that was required to convert a civilian into a soldier and to feed him with a rationed diet. A second class were those who, in response to the Government appeal, converted factories and workshops designed for other ends into production of commodities desired for the operations of war. In one great city which was prepared to challenge all others for increase of wealth during these five years of promiscuous slaughter in Europe, I inquired the secrets of its success. Mr. Lloyd George, I was informed, had come down and addressed some thousands of large and small manufacturers in the public hall; and urged them, in metaphor, to beat their ploughshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears. They had been exceedingly reluctant to accept his advice, but he had appealed to them in the names of their sons and brothers who were dying in France, and wept, and they, thinking of their sons and brothers, had wept also, and they had finally agreed to do what was asked of them, whatever might be the monetary sacrifice. "And what happened?" I asked. "There was not one of them," was the reply, "that had not at least doubled his fortune by converting his works into the making of munitions for the State." "And why are they uninterested in politics?" was the final query. "They are waiting," was the reply, "for the Prime Minister to come down and ask them to make some more sacrifices for the benefit of the country."

These changes undoubtedly involved a risk, and the men who accepted that risk cannot be charged with unpatriotic intentions.

There was a third class of profiteer to whom the same ideals can with difficulty be ascribed. That was the profiteer who definitely realised the nation's necessities, and who purchased or acquired an option upon the goods which the nation would require in war, deliberately to squeeze money out of the nation because it was bound to have the goods at any cost. Thus men would buy up an option on food or raw material in foreign countries, or buy up ships at home, and would sell these things to the nation at perhaps twice or three times the price they paid for them, thus deliberately acquiring large fortunes out of their country's need, struggling in desperate circumstances for its very existence. Many of these ingenious gentlemen are now worth tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds. They are buying the English lands from their former owners, and they are entering into every sport and device which can make their name popular in the newspapers. "You see great motors travelling the roads," said one observer to me, "which are finished to the last degree, and containing occupants who are not." They have joined the horse-patronising, boxing-patronising crowd who are prominent in modern British "publicity"; while the hospitals are closing for lack of funds, and English opera has been compelled to go bankrupt, and we have to solicit the foreigner with humility for the money to keep together the very stones of Westminster Abbey. They continue to make transactions, and some add to their wealth, and others lose it. Whether in the end they will see of the travail of their soul and be satisfied is a question which remains conjectural. But at least on awaking every morning they have the comfortable feeling of being rich and being alive; while scattered over the fields of France and Flanders lie those who are neither—more than half a million British dead.

It is not money which, we are told, is the root of all evil. It is the love of money which is the root of all evil. Money is merely a symbol or sign of redemption from the existence of the brute. It gives the power of life, of leisure,

of cleanliness, of bodily health through recreation, of freedom from anxiety, of the capacity for the concentration of energy in the service of an ideal. But the love of money, in the desire for the accumulation of great fortune for its own sake, has been branded by Christendom for numberless centuries as one of the seven deadly sins. And the lust for such accumulation in a man, who already possesses fortune which can satisfy all natural human instincts, is less a crime than a disease.

I remember an incident in the Cabinet in the early stages of the war. Death was striking right and left with merciless hands; and there was not a family, including especially that of the Prime Minister, which was not going softly for the loss of youth's rich promise. One of the Ministers narrated a commonplace story of how some speculators had purchased semi-derelict ships for I forget how many hundreds or thousands of pounds, and in one voyage, in bringing the necessities of food or munition to England, had made 400 per cent. or 500 per cent. profit.

"Disgusting," said Mr. Asquith.

A Minister at once protested. He declared that this was the normal operation of trade. He declared that if these men had not done it, other men would have done the same. He declared that if they had chosen not to bring the stuff to England, they would probably have obtained as much, or greater profit, by taking it to neutral or allied countries.

"I can see nothing disgraceful," he said, "about the whole transaction."

"I did not say disgraceful," said Mr. Asquith, with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders, "I said 'disgusting.'"

You may leave it at that.



*"What is love of one's land?*

*Ah, we know very well*

*It is something that sleeps for a year, for a day,*

*For a month, something that keeps*

*Very hidden and quiet and still,*

*And then takes*

*The quiet heart like a wave,*

*The quiet brain like a spell,*

*The quiet will*

*Like a tornado, and that shakes*

*The whole being and soul . . .*

*Aye, the whole of the soul."*

FORD MADOX HUEFFER.

## CHAPTER VII

### LOVE OF ONE'S LAND

HE is defiantly and unconquerably for the individual. He is the first in Europe to have escaped from the stifling embraces of the family on one hand. He will be the last in Europe on the other to submit to the stifling embraces of the State. Tennyson found Nature mysterious: "So careful of the type she seems, so careless of the single life." The Englishman is the antithesis of Nature, and grown farthest from all ancient and primitive instincts in the matter. He is very careful of the single life. He is entirely careless of the type. No Englishman thinks farther ahead than the fate of his grandson—if as far down as that. It is doubtful if, except in the cases of the few landed families with traditions of generations, which are trying to maintain these traditions of country estate and country home, any less inclination to save would be maintained against an Act that, after a grandchild, all bequest of wealth and property should cease, and the State receive the whole of the property accumulated.

#### I

In the mass he hates the State. To him it represents every type of meddlesome and fussy interference with his own activities, whether he is the wealthy motorist resenting the police trap or the poor widow hating the State Inspectors. He hates the State officials and the State regulations. He only asks that the State will leave him alone. He is the very opposite of the individual German, for example, who in practice was accepting the spirit of the Socialist

State before the war : the docile obedience of the citizen to law promulgated by an impersonal and all-powerful entity designed for his benefit. And while, during the war, the German was encouraging his fighting vigour by singing "Deutschland über Alles" and other songs in praise of the Fatherland, the Englishman was singing ribald or sentimental ditties, in which the praise of England had no part at all. And those classes among whom this landed and family tradition remains have been destroyed by the Great War, or are being destroyed on account of it, or their estates are being bought by tenants to save themselves from ejection, or by new war profiteers who merely regard a country house as an amenity, similar to a seat at the theatre, or a good meal, or any other personal enjoyment. Many of the most desperate accumulators of wealth are bachelors ; others without near relatives ; a large proportion with so limited a family that the desire to bequeath to them substantial riches must only be a secondary movement in the hungry pursuit of gain.

It is this defiant individualism, utterly regardless of State control, and apparently acquiesced in by the State itself, which so astonishes the foreigner who has been educated into "love of one's land" as a self-conscious virtue. A few years ago Edward Bernstein, the famous German Socialist, visited this strange island, and since the war he has published an account of the experiences to be found here. The impressions and summary of such a man—disinterested, talented, with a natural discernment and seeking only the truth—are far more valuable to the aborigines themselves than to the foreigner who is looking on from outside.

Here is a man, whose whole life has been developed under the sense of order, confronting a people who ignore such "order." This ignorance is genial, tolerant, kindly, and it produces a not unreasonable amount of happiness. It works miracles spontaneously, without effort, and without knowing that it is causing wonder to outsiders. Thus the author, bringing his wife and child to England, leaves his

luggage at St. Catherine's Dock, and suddenly feels consternation at the fact that he has no receipt for it. He hies him back to the Dock and makes his confession to the "elderly man" in charge. This triumphant anarchist acknowledges the black box, and informs him he may have it when he wishes, but, practically, that he will see him far off before he gives him a receipt. "A receipt? What do you want a receipt for?" he retorted. "I am accustomed to receive a written statement in such cases," pleaded the bewildered foreigner, "please be so obliging as to give me one. I am willing to pay for it," he added. Even that did not move the anarchist, who only grudgingly at the end "allowed himself to be persuaded, and wrote me the desired receipt, assuredly not without reflecting what crazy fellows those Germans were."

In similar fashion he describes the bewilderment and consternation of the German scientists, attending an International Congress at Edinburgh, at delivering their luggage without receipt. The heaping on the platform at the end of a long journey of miscellaneous parcels with porters dashing into the chaos with "small trolleys," and at the command of unknown passengers wheeling off luggage which they have no knowledge belongs to the alleged owners, seems to him the absolute type of irrational confusion which must lead to disaster. And yet the amazing system, or want of system, works. And he tells with pride, though not without wonder, that on his luggage being put into the wrong van, with no label on it with his name and address, and in a holiday season "of unusually congested traffic," he had but to describe the "size and colour of the trunk" to an official, and it miraculously arrived at his house on the following day. One can see the intellect condemning while the heart approves.

"Where men and women think lightly of the laws," says Whitman, "there the Great City stands." Nowhere does Bernstein find men and women thinking more lightly of the laws than among these islanders. One extraordinary experience summarises all. Staying at Eastbourne, and

finding that the price of a bathing machine was "more than my means justified me in paying," he walks to the eastward of the town, and finds, "to my great yet not disagreeable surprise, 'in all peace and comfort,' adults and children who had left their clothes on the beach, disporting themselves in the water, and no one saying them nay." On this beach is "a notice-board at least six feet wide, affixed to tall posts, informing me in large letters: 'Bathing not allowed here.'" Thinking this a possible sudden outbreak of riotous behaviour he inquires whether people often bathe there, and receives the cheery reply: "Every day when the weather permits." One seems to see a symbolic picture of these two great and racially similar nations, so divided by history as to become, the one ordered and regimented beyond reason, and the other truculently defiant of control. In the one case a great crowd waits in front of the sign, *Verboten*, planted by caprice or mistake, or ill-timed humour, before a perfectly innocuous path. In the other, a crowd of triumphant "adults and children disport themselves in the waves" under the legend "Bathing strictly prohibited."

The same contrast is seen in great and little: Bernstein traces from long residence and the friendship of the great exiles Marx, Engels and the rest, the experience of the slow degeneration of the mid-Victorian house and the mid-Victorian suburb into the post-Victorian slum. You can see, though he is too polite to make the contrast, his contempt for this acceptance of chaos as against the pre-war development of the sensible, rational, efficient German town-planning, with its great roads and its solid blocks of flats, which made the cities of modern Germany at once the most intelligent and the most dreary habitations of men. He can reveal in our hideous, decaying stucco buildings, glorious parties, in which Engels insists on meals and meeting in the kitchen, because it is nearest to the wine cellar. He meets John Burns. "Until then," he remarks, "I had never met an abstainer face to face," regarding an "abstainer" as some kind of strange animal. "That so

sturdy a worker should, on principle, abstain from the least drop of beer, was to me a quite unexpected phenomenon." But in the unregulated, unregenerated, decaying Victorian suburb he finds the England of Dickens ; genial, individual, eating and drinking copiously, free ; an England which might not have survived under the influence of a communal inspectorate and a carefully ordered city. He is continually surprised that these high-storied houses are let out to separate families without the German flat system. They have a common staircase ; and yet, he asserts, there is a prejudice against locking the doors of the separate rooms, and each seemingly trusts the others not to pry or pilfer. He is astonished that when he is seeking for a house he finds a notice, "Key with Mr. X., No. 48." He goes to No. 48 and gets the key, though Mr. X. has never seen him before in his life, and, as he quite reasonably says, there is nothing to prevent him making a cast of the key. "I met with a blind confidence," he says, "on the part of the populace, which I should least of all have expected to find in the vast city of London." But "this is only an example," he declares, "of the fact that confidence and honesty are far more prevalent among the population of London than one would be inclined to imagine from all one has read of the thieves of the capital." It is as if a reader of Bret Harte, visiting a Western mining town, was amazed to find no shooting at sight in the saloon, and no corpses nightly cumbering the ground.

In similar fashion, waiting at Gravesend at a lonely landing-place for a ship coming up the river, with a few workmen, the only human beings to be seen, his preconceived conceptions are still further shattered. These workmen drag up a bench for his comfort ; when it drizzles they provide a tarpaulin ; when the rain falls heavily they invite him to a covered scaffolding ; when the ship does not appear they send him to an eating-house for food, promising to warn him when it arrives. This one of them does, and on the stranger's departure, "I had some trouble," is the confession, "to persuade him to accept

a token of my gratitude." In such incidents these queer barbarians "showed me, unasked, all sorts of attentions, which, after all I had read of the English, I should never in the least have expected of such men."

## II

Nor does the patriotism of England for the present extend to any far vision of the future. How many who multiply riches—even in the actual creation of wealth, apart from those who suck it up from others—are really inspired by a self-conscious desire to make their country prosperous for future generations? Speculators endeavour to scare the Englishman with a vision of a hundred years hence, when there will be, say, more Japanese than Englishmen in the world; or two hundred years hence when his paying coal and therefore his wealth will have gone; or later visions, when only the broken arches of London Bridge or the battered dome of St. Paul's Cathedral will reveal to nomads on the surrounding hills the place where once stood the greatest city in the world. He cares nothing for these prophecies, nor would he make sacrifice of the present in order that these prophecies might not be fulfilled. His heart is not set in accumulation, nor his ideal gathered round the tradition of fixed and permanent things.

And if his motive-power be no increase of communal riches, his heart is no more set on the "commune" in which he was born. And here he has advanced further than all those nations in which the peasant life has fixed deep roots in the soil. He is a seafarer, a wayfarer, a pilgrim and stranger in this life, as his fathers were. The sentimentalist may draw pictures of the individuals in the great emigration from the life of the fields to the city or beyond the sea, in which the boys and girls on departing weep sadly over leaving for ever the old cottage home of their fathers. Facts are quite otherwise. The mind of the wanderer is turned not upon the past but on the future, to the zest

and sparkle of adventure and the joy of being free. In the minds of the two races nearest him, the oppression of that family sentiment, inherited through countless generations, falls heavily upon such upheavals. And, in the spirit of France and of Ireland, the dead dominate the living almost as completely as under the recognised system of ancestor-worship which maintained in the East dead empires in stagnation for centuries, until the East began to awake. Only in Ireland the scenes of departure are as piteous and almost as tragic as the scenes of the burial of the dead. The problem here is partially solved by a voluntary tribute of money from thousands of unwilling emigrants to thousands of peasant homes still remembered with passionate affection; and of patriotism or love of that home which keeps the emigrant almost as unassimilated as the Jew, in every corner of the world. And in France the knot is sharply cut by a method which would have astonished the disciples of Malthus and made hay of his once dominant generalisation. There is no emigration from France, and therefore no sorrow over emigration, for the very simple reason that the French peasant refuses to produce any children to emigrate.

It is doubtful, in this influence of psychology, which is the hen and which is the egg. Are the English people landless—with the bulk of their country owned by a tiny proportion of "propertied" classes, now largely watered in stock by Jews, Americans and Profiteers—because they have never cared for the maintenance of the family tradition in association with places? Or are they careless of the family tradition because they are landless? Was the peasant-right of England to his own land not established because the revolution never came to England? (For, wherever the revolution went, from Finisterre to the borders of Poland, the peasants acquired their land.) Or was it, because the peasants did not care about owning their land that the revolution never came to England? It is difficult to be dogmatic on a question concerning which so much can be said on both sides, but I am inclined to think the second statement more true. If the English had cared



enough for their land they would have fought for it as the French peasants did, and as the Irish peasants did, and obtained it at last, however hopeless the fight once appeared. We have little devotion to the soil of England as England, although we have much devotion to the race of Englishmen as Englishmen.

So when the bad times came they simply walked out of the countryside into the great cities, or the bolder adventures beyond the sea—to America and the five nations which make up the British Dominions. No other people can show a parallel emigration: if emigration is accepted as a transfer from village to London or Manchester as much as to Winnipeg, to Johannesburg, to Sydney or to Auckland. They went with desire to escape from discomfort and privation. But they went with the severing of all the bonds which connected them with the cottages in which their forefathers had lived for scores of generations, or the church round which these ancestors were buried. They went determined never to return.

That is why they are content more than any other race to live in the great cities, and only use the country at intervals and with some reluctance, when the sun shines, as a place for play-making, or love-making, or excursions into a strange unnatural world. But they are no more settled in these cities than on the countryside is. They move readily from one to the other; they move readily from all into foreign lands. Numbers of them buy the houses in which they live. But this is rather to avoid the unwelcome attentions of the rent-collector than with any idea of establishing a permanent family home. None of them would grieve in the least to hear that their sons were prepared to sell these houses at a profit, nor would they ever themselves refuse to sell at a profit if they could obtain better and less expensive accommodation elsewhere. Nor, must it be confessed, is there any obvious reason in most cases why they should feel pride in the possession of a local habitation and a name. For the thing has been built by the speculative builder for sale, and not for permanence.

Before many years have passed, it is crumbling about the heads of the unfortunate owners : with doors that will not shut, chimneys that will not draw, sanitary apparatus requiring the constant attention of the undesired plumber, ceilings that bulge and threaten every moment to break. The owner, as he surveys this ruin of man's handiwork, has no desire that his descendants shall permanently inhabit an "Acacia Villa" from which even the acacias have disappeared, or a "Nightingale Terrace" from which the nightingales have for ever flown.

That is why most families in the suburbs of cities can show at least four or five moves in one generation ; why builders will not erect houses permanently to be inhabited, because the high-spirited inhabitants do not desire permanent habitation of them ; and why the whole of a city like working-class London would present to any observer from above who could see through the roofs of its dwellings, a continual aimless moving round, like goldfish in an aquarium, from one block dwelling to another block dwelling, from one mean street to another mean street, without conscious object, purpose or plan. It is true this process has been sharply arrested by the war. That is not because of any spiritual or mental change. It is because of arrest of material opportunity. With practically no new houses being built, and the demand savagely exceeding the supply, each inhabitant clings wildly to whatever lair he can occupy without being disturbed by the police or mulcted of impossible rent. Amongst the poorest, one or two rooms or at the most three, will hold many families thus cast derelict in an overcrowded ant-heap, and go back to the conditions which prevailed in Victorian England : the only difference being that whereas in the past such overcrowding was the privilege of the poorest and most degraded, it is now a compulsion on quite well-off and, as we say, "respectable" families, not because they do not desire other accommodation, but because no other accommodation exists. But such acquiescence in a hutch must not be mistaken for enthusiasm for a home. I doubt if the

restlessness is any less present because the restlessness is forbidden, any more than that you would deduce that a prisoner had no desire for liberty because he sat apparently quiet in a barred cell, with his legs attached by chains to heavy iron balls.

I believe if you gave the English townsfolk each a house and a holding in the country, that within a year more than half would be back in the towns. I believe if you gave a house in the town as a free gift to all ex-soldiers, in ten years half the houses would be either let or sold, and the other half mortgaged to the hilt.

The English are a sea race and a wandering race; coming from an amalgam of peoples which lived restlessly for many hundred or thousand years on the borders of the sea. It is impossible to believe that there penetrated into that amalgam much, on the one hand, of that so-called Celtic stock, whose descendants clung and still cling to deplorable plots of heath and rock and sand with unconquerable tenacity; or, on the other, much of that Saxon element which settled down in the great plains of Europe away from wandering; to cultivate its land with such industry as to survive wars and invasions, massacres and privations, which would have destroyed any people less resolutely determined to remain and to occupy its own soil.

The dreamer and poet finds much to regret in the depopulation of the British countryside, and in his vision of the cottage, with roses climbing over it and dormer windows, and the firm garden of old English flowers, and hay harvest, and wheat harvest, inspiration for a cry of "Back to the land." The expert will report how much of the nation's food could be grown by intensive cultivation. The practical reformer will regret the vision of broad acres with no smoking chimneys, and the vision of wilderness and desolation in regions which he once believed were "Merrie England." The farmer will lament the departure of his labour without which he cannot cultivate the land, and equally lament any fixing of the price of labour which alone

might save some labourers for him. Many reasons are given for this depopulation, which the changes of the war have in part arrested, and which feverish legislation has attempted to destroy. These changes will be useless, and in a few years prove to be useless. They will be useless, not necessarily because of the call of the towns, or the lure of the cinema, or the loneliness of the country. For in a few years' time the towns will cease to lure, and the cinema will be in every village, and the loneliness even inordinately broken by the ubiquitous *char-à-banc* or motor, and "listening-in" provided at village halls and village schools at which the whole population at evening can hear the declamation of the latest popular demagogue or the humour of the latest popular revue. They will be useless because the English people do not care enough about the English land to mind what becomes of it. They care neither for the country nor for the town, nor does the country care for the town nor the town for the country. If attempts are made to force the town to pay subsidies for the products of the country in order to aid the life of the country, the towns will immediately resist such subsidies. If attempts are made to protect the manufactures of the town, to enrich the town by making the country pay more for those products, such of the country as still exists will endeavour to destroy that "protection."

In France there is an expression "*La Patrie*" which is totally untranslatable into English. It is something entirely different from the robust word "patriotism." It is the personal affection for the very soil of a native land, delicate and tender, with a sense that the violation of it by the foreign invader is an actual crime not inadequately comparable to the violation of a woman or a child. It was this spirit which put fury into the heart of the French during the war when attempting to defend every rock and river of the soil of France. The men from the West and South whose homes were unendangered fought as desperately and died as nobly as the actual inhabitants of the *terre sainte*—the "sacred land." It is this spirit

which is determined to put back on to their own hearths, which have been utterly destroyed, in a soil almost incapable of cultivation, those peasant populations whose ancestors had owned and tilled those very fields, since the time before history began.

No such sentiment animates the patriotism of the Englishman. His patriotism is of race and not of soil. If a town was burnt down and its inhabitants received ample compensation, and it was more economic to build it elsewhere, he would build it elsewhere, and add to the income of the newer city by charging admission for visitors to the ruins of the older place.

### III

Indeed, if one may state a paradox, the only sense of the sacredness of the "land" revealed in the war by the English was his sense of the sacredness of the sea. For it was the seafaring folk of this country who were filled with the sense of furious amazement that the "Dutchman," as they called him, should even dare to show his face upon the sea at all, over which they assumed themselves to have unchallenged dominion. And they were moved to their astonishing efforts and energies which formed the raw material of a thousand epics, less by the "Dutchman's" atrocities on the ocean, than by the mere insolence of the "Dutchman's" existence on the ocean. The great army from Britain and all our dominions which fought so stubbornly and through such endurance on foreign soil was not, I think, fighting definitely with a vision that it was preserving this "little land of England." Nine-tenths of them fought never conceiving that under any circumstances would the "Boche" be able to touch the soil of England. Indeed, you had the remarkable spectacle that whenever the German fleet bombarded a British town such as Hartlepool or Scarborough, the male inhabitants in fury rushed to the recruiting stations to enlist, and were swept out to France, Gallipoli or Mesopotamia instead of being enrolled for the defence of their seaside home, their desire

being to get even with the Boche, but never with any belief that the Boches would actually be able to occupy the towns they had battered to pieces.

They fought because the Boche had become "a bit too thick," because their minds had been aggravated by stories of Boche outrage; because in some the fierce joys of fighting were natural to them, and because in others they were compelled to fight, although no such fierce joys were with them. They fought because in all was the determination that the English and not the German should be "top dog." They did not fight because of any definite advantages in money or territory which they hoped to gain at the end. Nor did they fight because of sheer devotion to the soil of their native land. They fought, sometimes fiercely, sometimes stubbornly, and often with grumbling and disgust, as men fight for the heavy-weight championship—to be on top—though without the encouragement of monetary reward.

Only in some of the members of families raised on the land for generations and gifted with the power of articulate expression in verse and prose, do you find the sadness of the bereavement of the sight of beloved places, and the awfulness of death intensified by the knowledge that they will never again see some river or forest or hillside. It was to these that "love of one's land" represented an emotion undefinable and incommunicable, but far transcending any rational explanation, and with something of the feeling reserved for a lover or a god.

They were homesick indeed, as all Englishmen everywhere are sick for home at times, and as "Home Sweet Home" has become the national anthem of England. But the home was something definite and human, the family in a pictured domestic parlour, "a child's white face to kiss at night, a woman's smile by candle-light." The accepted melody of an earlier day was the desire for a "Tipperary," which had no English local interpretation, except the unnoticed vulgarity of Piccadilly and Leicester Square. It was for the definite objects of family affection, the sweet-

heart, the tavern, the comfort and settled life of an existence whose pleasantness was only realised when it had come to be abandoned. I doubt if the majority of the race would mind if the whole population suddenly decided to take up all its goods and move to a new England elsewhere, so long as that accustomed life could be carried on under more favourable conditions but essentially the same: leaving this "old England" to be a museum for the ownership of wealthy Americans, and the countryside overrun with ivy and a habitation of bats and owls.

But the sea is, in reality, the home of the people of this little island. Those who have read the amazing story of how Admiral Bacon kept the narrow Straits through all the years of war, with the most amazing scratch collection of ships and men, always inferior to the Germans in actual numbers, yachtsmen, fishermen, ferry boats and practically the scrap iron of the Navy, will agree with his conclusion that there is something in the blood and temper of this race which responds to the call and echo of the sea. Before the war we had a merchant fleet almost equal to that of all the other countries of the world combined. And even to-day, if you go to London, you find the larger half, and perhaps the better half, east of London Bridge, occupied with the effort of men who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters. It is not the gigantic floating hotels, carrying gardeners and swimming baths, breaking speed limits, and the last word in luxury which are the special creation and pride of Britain. It is the mercantile fleet and the tramp steamers and all the variegated craft which with inadequate means challenged the great storms and oceans: from Shackleton defying the Antarctic and the charge of icebergs two miles square with a crew of twenty-five, to "Sweepers--*Unity, Claribel, Assyrian, Stormcock and Golden Gain.*"

"Dusk off the Foreland—the last light going  
And the traffic crowding through,  
And five damned trawlers with their syreens blowing  
Heading the whole review!"

"Sweep completed in the fairway.  
No more mines remain.  
Sent back *Unity, Claribel, Assyrian, Stormcock* and  
*Golden Gain.*"

The sea enters into every great song and story of the English race; from the epic of the Gentlemen Adventurers of Elizabethan days, to the vision of Nelson watching over the great city to which his body was brought home from the most famous of all sea fights, far away. The sea is also the greatest of all the cemeteries of the British people; so that "there's never a wave of all her waves, but marks our English dead." It is with this call at the heart challenging the call of the fields that the Englishman contemplates "love of one's land." And the fields seem dull and dusty and the cities close and crowded in comparison with the vast spaces of sunlight and stormy weather which the English race has made its home.

"Then hold your head up all the more  
This tide  
And every tide,  
Because he was the son you bore,  
And gave to that wind blowing and that tide."

So that the British Empire, with its strange assortment of the occupation of great continents on the one hand, and on the other of little islands and peninsulas and tiny corners chipped off from inland territories, may be said to be in some ways a product of the Briton's lack of passion for his own particular town or village, and his sense of glory as an adventurer with triumph and the taming of this great menacing monster which other races have found best to leave aside. And the unity of that Empire is being preserved, in a paradox of a great English poet, by the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea."

I am reluctant to generalise concerning neighbouring nations; knowing how fierce controversy can be, when such generalisations are regarded as unpleasant. Yet I believe in the main the verdict holds: the love of the land accompanies local association with it, in the form of small



freeholds and peasant proprietorships. It tends to vanish in the cities, and in the greatest of them it practically disappears. A fierce patriotism burns in Wales, but far more in the North with its cottage countryside than in the scarred industrial regions of the South. In Scotland I think I can see the line clearly demarcated: the Highlanders moved by love of their own often barren and inadequate possessions, cherishing a land hunger similar to the Irish peasants; and the Lowlanders, inspired not so much by love of country as by pride of race. That is why migration presents no terrors to them, and everywhere in the world, from Patagonia to the Philippines, the Scotch engineer or the Scotch manager is in possession. It is true that Sir Walter Scott has addressed lines of affection to "Caledonia stern and wild," but the sentiment does not seem universal. The sons of stern Caledonia migrate with alacrity to London and other British cities, and their peasants even come down to retill a depopulated Essex. I find the authentic tone in Burns, through whom, whatever his claim to Highland descent, speaks, I think, the real voice of Lowland Scotland. The "Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon" are not addressed in any poetic rapture for their own beauty: that beauty is exposed as challenging the weariness and sadness of the poet as he gazes on them or remembers them in vision. The greatest song of friendship and companionship the world has ever seen shows nothing of desire for a return "home," but only the tragedy of separation of friends.

"We twa ha'e paidt'd i' the burn,  
Frae morning sun till dune,  
But seas between us braid ha'e roared  
Sin' auld lang syne."

But when you go to the North, it is the passion for the actual ground, the very sacred soil once trodden by passing feet, which inspires the songs of the exile.

"From the low sheiling and the misty island  
Mountains divide us, and a world of seas;  
But still the heart is true, the heart is Highland,  
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

In Ireland, lastly, the love of country is a passion which, if patriotism can ever so degenerate, may almost become a disease. Her scattered children everywhere turn to that little grey island. Her poets and writers hail her with every epithet of endearment and tenderness. She is the Tir-na-og, the land of the ever young: the Dark Rosaleen; the Kathaleen Ny-Houlahan, the little old woman who will some day become young and beautiful, with the walk of a Queen. Twenty million men of Irish descent inhabit foreign lands, England, America, the Dominions. They attain prosperity, and in many cases prominent positions of wealth and power, but still find their hearts drawn towards "a naked land, a barren land," in which there has been no peace for five hundred years, and in which there is no peace to-day. I remember a friend telling me of an old Irish woman whom he had visited, sick in a dingy cellar in Newcastle, whose sole wish before she died was to see again for a moment that "Holy Ground." "The memory of it," she said, "is never out of me moind: never out of me heart."

"Ah! the tramp of feet victorious! I should hear them 'mid the shamrocks and the mosses,  
And my heart should toss within the shroud and quiver as a captive dreamer tosses."

"Let me join with you the jubilant procession: let me chant with you her story;  
Then contented I shall go back to the shamrocks, now mine eyes have seen her glory!"

It is a "love of one's land," enduring beyond the hour of death and the day of judgment; after all other earthly desires have gone.

*"True," cries the Professor. "Too crowded indeed! Meanwhile, what portion of this inconsiderable terraqueous globe have ye actually tilled and delved until it can grow no more? How thick stands your Population in the Pampas and Savannas of America, round ancient Carthage and in the interiors of Africa; on both slopes of the Attic chain, in the central platform of Asia; in Spain, Greece, Turkey, Grim Tartary, the Curragh of Kildare? . . . Where now are the Hengsts and Alarics who . . . will guide onwards these superfluous masses of indomitable living valour, equipped, not now with the battle-axe and war chariot, but with the steam-engine and ploughshare? Where are they?"*

CARLYLE.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BABIES

MORE than a hundred years ago the famous *Essay on Population* was launched anonymously as an explosive tract upon the world. The impeachment of God rather than of kings and tyrants as responsible by a paradoxical law for the miseries of the world excited fury amongst the Radicals of the age. Cobbett termed the author "Parson Malthus," because, as he declared, he could think of no more insulting epithet. Hazlitt, while exonerating the blameless Professor of History at Haileybury College from the passions of anger, pride and avarice, accused him of being the "slave to an amorous complexion," and of believing all other men to be made "of the same combustible materials." The recipient of such onslaughts went equably on his way, asserting that he was "never vexed after the first fortnight." He continued to sadden men who believed in a future age of golden happiness. Man (he said) increases by geometrical progression. Man's food supply increases only by arithmetical progression. In most countries at present—so ran his contention—in all countries in the future, men are therefore brought up by the blind instinct of desire against conditions which leave them fighting in vain for a sufficient supply of food. The only remedies for such a condition are war, famine, pestilence, which are Nature's remedies; vice, which is one of men's; moral restraint, which is another. Lacking these, in the vision of his logical followers, all improvement of material condition is only intensifying the torment of mankind. For that improvement produces immediate response in an increase in reproduction and a reduced mortality; and the "swarm" once more beats

against the inexorable limits of the cage. The late comers, as Malthus declared in the suppressed passage of the first essay, at "Nature's mighty feast," find the "table is already full," and "the unbidden guests are left to starve." Such were the contentions of a quiet clergyman philosopher. They startled or saddened a whole generation of reformers; and, through their influence upon the mind of Darwin, produced the *Origin of Species*, which transformed the thought of the world.

The central doctrine of the creed of Malthus is now being examined in the light of changes which his opponents and his supporters alike would have regarded as incredible when the controversy first arose. They are changes in the external world outside man, in invention, human discovery, the control of power and blind matter, and forces which, although he cannot understand, he can command to do his bidding. There are greater changes in the mind of man himself, in his attitude towards the production of progeny, in his refusal to accept the assertion of the elder Mirabeau that "given the means of subsistence men will multiply like rats in a barn." An extraordinarily interesting and serious discussion of these problems is found in the Reports and Evidence of the National Birth-Rate Commission. This voluntary Committee of men and women of distinction has deserved high honour for the devotion it has shown in the attempts to probe fearlessly into the neglected questions of human birth-rate and the influence of various forces upon it. Its reports are a mine of information, its witnesses a challenge to a hundred problems and their solution.

Examining the whole problem now for the first time frankly discussed in post-war England, we can see at once how the central core of the Malthusian theory has collapsed. On the one hand, the theory of geometrical progression in race increase and arithmetical progression in products has vanished; and with that theory, the whole nightmare which weighed so heavily on the minds of those who worked for race ideals. It still prevails, by the operation of the law

of diminishing returns, in such regions as Malthus saw it working in, Ireland and India, where an increasing population is limited to a definite piece of ground which cannot be tilled and fertilised into unlimited productivity. From such a plot an Irish peasant could just manage to raise a crop sufficient to maintain a family in semi-starvation. If the land were divided among the children, they were in hopeless ruin. To-day, it is calculated that on the wheat lands of Canada, the work of six men in one year will produce sufficient corn and carry it to any of the great cities of the world, to feed during that year a thousand persons. And only a fraction of the wheat lands of Canada has even been scratched. The same outrunning of population by produce is everywhere manifest, where one man, by pressing a button or tending a machine, may turn out clothes or boots in greater quantity than the laborious toil of five hundred workers when Malthus first wrote his essay. Economists like Mr. Harold Cox and Mr. J. M. Robertson may declare to the Commission—in the words of the former—that “if birth control is banned as immoral, we shall be forced to choose between various methods of death encouragement, such as infanticide, chronic underfeeding, periodic massacres, and the propagation of deadly diseases,” or, in the contention of the latter, that no duty is laid upon this country to lower our standards of life in order to produce swarms of children to fill up waste spaces of the Empire. But it would seem that, even apart from birth control, experience has shown that the Christian Malthus, in his pessimism, was less correct in his forecast than old Godwin, the atheist, with his boundless optimism, who replied to him that there was plenty of room on earth at present, and that though the population may increase through myriads of centuries there will still be plenty.

But the encouragement caused by the spectacle of limitless production is of far less importance than the change which has taken place in men's minds. An increasing number of millions every year is acquiring knowledge which means a complete and deliberate defeat of Nature's

demand for limitless fecundity. And amongst all except the members of those religions which regard all artificial birth control as a crime, the family is coming to be regulated without that "moral restraint" which Malthus, although preaching it as an ideal, practically acknowledged to be impossible for the mass of mankind. More than any schemes of conquerors, migrations, or all previous transformations of humanity, this universal knowledge is destined to bring great changes upon the world. The main subject of controversy now centres round the question whether such control is to be approved or condemned. To the assertion that it is "unnatural" the advocates demonstrate the "unnaturalness" of the whole ethical process, as by Huxley in the famous Romanes lecture. If men can cheat Nature of the waste and misery created by its impulse for multiplication of individuals, in the "struggle" for existence, man is in the tradition in which he has lifted himself from the ape and tiger. It is "natural," as one witness says, for married life in many women to be one long disease—the "disease of excessive procreation," almost inevitably accompanied by high infant mortality. That is all in harmony with a world process which scatters innumerable seeds that one may bear, and is content that "a thousand types are gone." To-day, again, the opponents of birth control demand large families partly to repair the ravages of war, partly to people unoccupied lands with the British race, partly again because the nations or creeds which exercise birth control seem destined to be swarmed out and suffocated by those who refuse it. In the first case the argument is so naive as to be almost satirical. "In the event of a war similar to that which we have just experienced, what would happen to us with a greatly reduced birth-rate? Surely all we have would be taken, and we must become slaves." To any such demand for breeding cannon fodder the women of Europe will give but one reply. You say we must breed children to be killed in future wars. We say that if you cannot avert such wars, we will breed no children. Let the race perish that

acquiesces in such criminal lunacy—and in a huge mad-house only the madmen remain.

What is the exact effect of this reduction or elimination of babies in post-war England? Before the catastrophe came, France was actually declining in numbers, although there was little if any emigration from her shores. The birth-rate in England was dropping by terrific strides, and it was evident it would shortly approximate to that of France. Indeed, the increase in population was only maintained by the thrusting back of the death-rate many years through improved skill and sanitation. Immediately after the war there was for a short time a great rise in the marriage-rate and a very short rise in the birth-rate. But now the descent has commenced again, and everyone can foresee that quite apart from Malthus' natural remedies of war, pestilence and famine, the English race will be exhibiting a decline in numbers in its own land. And this will be an absolute decline, apart from emigration, which demands the procreation and rearing of British boys and girls to fill up empty spaces in great continents which we desire to continue to be "for ever England." Moreover, the limitation is obviously proved to be not of old families dying out through in-breeding or a kind of physical flagging in vitality. It is a limitation of the best stock which has succeeded through energy and intelligence, as distinguished from those who for some reason or other have fallen to the bottom of Society. I think, for example, that the clergymen stand lowest in size of family, while in slums of great cities childbirth is a "perpetual disease." The subject is discussed in eugenic and even in Church Congresses. To those who are troubled by consideration of the future of the race the outlook appears black. Everyone realises that birth control has come to stay, and that only the Roman Catholic Church is making any effective stand against it. Everyone realises the enormous difference in life and comfort among those with comparatively small incomes between a prolific swarm on the one hand, and on the other a limited number of babies or no babies at all.



And everyone realises that as the desire for content and comfort is gradually sweeping away all questions of duty to the race or supernatural sanctions, that desire for content and comfort will find its expression more and more in absence of marriage or in marriage without children. It is at present, for example, almost impossible for a man and wife and family of limited means to find a house to live in, and, even if he does so, the Government with its indirect taxation on necessities of life, and the enormous cost of living produced since the war, make his life a sordid and miserable struggle in comparison with a bachelor of similar income. At the same time, even among the wealthy, to whom these considerations do not apply, the "disease of child-bearing" is being summarily cured, and the average of children in historic families is less than half what it was in the Victorian era. These considerations, as I have said, may sadden those who care for the future of the British race. But how many, as a matter of fact, do care for the future of the British race, or indeed of any race at all, beyond the few generations whose lives they can apprehend?

Dr. Johnson once asserted that no sensible man ever lost a night's sleep by brooding over public affairs. And it is only the preaching, as a religion of Mr. H. G. Wells and his followers, of a concern for the public good and the welfare of the race of mankind which will stand on this six foot of green earth a hundred or a thousand years hence, which has excited men of high ardour to consider what that race will be. That consideration will in the main be determined by the decisions of the individuals of all the various races how many children they will bring into the world.

It is a problem of extraordinary interest. It deals with facts, and reasoning from facts, which all men should attempt to understand. The conclusion seems to be established that, apart from the abnormal conditions of the war, there is a steady movement, which sometimes advances more rapidly, sometimes less, but never goes back, for the

reduction of the number of children born into the world, by the Western races of Europe. Mr. Havelock Ellis, indeed, seems to have proved that this development has advanced most rapidly among the Anglo-Saxon stock; and that everywhere, in America, in Canada, in Australia, that stock is going down in defeat before prolific swarms of Irishmen, Italians, Jews, Eastern races, and "lesser breeds without the law." It is going down deliberately, and not by defeat in open conflict; in a dismal repetition of the fulfilled prophecies of Tacitus when Rome was master of the world, that the refusal of the women of Rome to have children must mean the ultimate triumph of the Northern barbarians.

This diminution is common to all civilised races, except those in which any artificial limitation is expressly forbidden by race sentiment or religious prohibitions—the nations still Roman Catholic, the Jews, the Chinese, the inhabitants of India.

If this process continues, we can see a world in which the dominant white races, dwindling in number, or outswarmed by others, will occupy but a tiny fragment of a territory crowded with Jews and Chinamen and Indians, and the various races at present deemed "uncivilised." We see the historic European order and the present European domination collapse and disappear before the pressure of such a world. And we see the historic quarrel between Catholic and Protestant and between Catholic and Free-thinker, settled in favour of the Catholic, not by argument but by prolific multiplication: by cradle, not by mind. The Catholic has unlimited children, the Protestant has few children or no children. No isolated "conversions" can compensate for such a riotous competition.

The conspicuous object lesson of this competition is in Canada, where the French-Canadians, the most faithfully Catholic race in the world, confront their neighbours, the descendants of Protestant settlers. These latter hardly increase in number at all. But for emigration their popula-

tion would be actually declining. They refuse to have families, or at least to have large families. The French-Canadians, when we took Quebec, consisted of some 50,000 persons. They have had no increase in their numbers from outside. They now not only number millions but have occupied the whole of Quebec Province; they have swarmed into Ontario and all the West. They have swarmed down into New England and driven out from the industrial cities there the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers. Their limit of the family is only bounded by the capacity of the wife to bear a multitude of children.

They are a sober, healthy, industrious race, amongst whom certain specific ravaging European diseases are almost unknown. Families of twelve, fifteen and seventeen (all reared to adult life) are not in the least uncommon. It is a land vocal with the noise and laughter of children. And through these children it is achieving the peaceful conquest of the Dominion of Canada. In 1918 the birth-rate in the Protestant Provinces, such as British Columbia or Prince Edward's Isle, was thirteen and seventeen per thousand respectively; in Quebec, thirty-eight. If such figures continue, it is evident that one race is inevitably destined to go down before the other.

But perhaps the most important, and certainly the most disquieting, evidence is that which shows that within this country it is the healthy and energetic and successful stocks who are producing the fewest children. They are producing the fewest children, not from any natural incapacity to produce many, but from deliberate determination to limit the family. They marry late, or they do not marry at all; or when married they produce no children or restrict their children to one or two and no more.

The increase of the race is only kept up by a multiplication of children amongst the poorest classes in the crowded slums of the cities. And those children suffer from two disadvantages. The first is that they are the descendants of stocks which have failed, instead of succeeding in the battle of life; and often failed because they have them-

selves been inheritors of disease or physical or mental weakness, or themselves reared in slum conditions. The second is that these swarms of largely unwanted children will be brought up under conditions so different from those of the wealthy, the professional and Middle Classes, and the artisans, that they will be handicapped all through life by this upbringing.

An altogether outrageous proportion of them will die in infancy or childhood. The remainder will grow up scarred and maimed for life's effort. A few, remarkable in will-power and intelligence, will struggle upwards to the highest positions in the land. The bulk of them will never become what they might have been had they been reared in decent conditions and without the accompaniments of poor food, crowded dwellings, and an environment unfavourable to health and development.

You may accuse, if you please, those possessing wealth and security of selfishness and lack of patriotism in refusing the obligation of large families. In the Victorian times, and in the midst of arduous public services, these classes undertook the responsibility of almost unlimited numbers of children. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Lyttelton married two sisters. The one had twelve children, the other eight. All of them were conspicuous for unusual distinction of body and mind. Such was the accepted standard of those distant days.

In the war bulletins, however, the difference was manifest in the repeated announcement: "Only son of Lord R—," or "Only child of Sir William B—." The professional and Middle Classes are less open to such accusation. High prices and cruel taxation are driving them up against a standard of living which in itself is not extravagant. Either the baby or the standard has to go. More babies means, literally, an injury to the babies already born; a worse education, smaller accommodation, less opportunity, scantier food. Whether a nation is wise thus to render so difficult the multiplication of its brain workers, the teachers, professional men, scientists, inventors and the

like—remains doubtful. But that it is doing so is absolutely certain.

“The fertility of the Middle Classes” is much lower than that of manual workers, and amongst the latter the rates returned by the upper working classes are much below those of the lower. “The classes which have demonstrated superior capacity for the struggle of life in the past by rising in the social scale have, during the recent past, ceased to contribute anything like their fair share to the nation’s capital of men and women.”

We have lost seven hundred thousand dead—all healthy and young. We possess, under the control of the British race, vast undeveloped spaces of the globe which could easily support in comfort hundreds of millions of an English-speaking race. We have not even begun to stretch the possible resources of the little island in which we live. We are confronted with the coming competition of whole races which are beating against the limits of their boundaries, and which see just beyond them, as in the Far East, vast unoccupied territories which are kept almost empty because the British people who own them refuse to have children.

In 1759 Benjamin Franklin joyfully announced that fennel could multiply until it had overrun the whole world, and that there was no reason why the English race should not effect a similar multiplication with a similar result. To-day the omens are unfavourable. The English race is but doubtfully holding its own. It would seem that consideration of laws, or the lack of them, which are effecting this unexpected change, might well form the subject of consideration by statesmen and Government, and the people who keep them in power.

### III

How much is this fear of the future for their children in itself a sign of diminishing vitality? How far does not a race which refuses to multiply itself by the deliberate

choice of individuals deserve to die? In France, honours and distinctions are given to the fathers of large families as being those who have deserved well of their country; and such a Government intervention is comprehensible when one remembers that in 1870 the French and Germans were nearly equal in numbers, and in 1914 the Germans were 20,000,000 in excess. So that, but for her allies, France would have been hopelessly beaten when war was declared. Is there any rational policy which can lay down a standard somewhere between the terrific multiplication which Malthus and his followers saw progressing among the poorest races, to the infinite injury of mothers and children, and an enforced and often selfish sterility on the other hand which deliberately refuses to consider the future of the race? For a normally healthy woman to bear, say, four children at reasonable intervals under modern conditions is not an intolerable hardship. It is not unnatural, and under adjusted economic conditions it would not be impossible from the point of view of the family and the home. But at the present moment the limitation of houses and the cost of living, combined with this extraordinary impulse in governing circles to reduce the possibilities of education, are making this standard unacceptable to the majority of the British race. Beyond this fact, however, there looms an even more difficult problem. In the vision of Malthus, war, pestilence and famine were the scourges which kept down the indefinite multiplication of the human family. Pestilence and famine one may still admit as operating in this direction, for in pestilence and famine the weak are first destroyed, and the destruction involves both sexes. But in modern war, it is almost entirely the men who are destroyed. Again, in pestilence and famine, the old and young are normally the first to succumb. But modern war, as we have seen it, whatever madness or wickedness inflames the hearts of men, deliberately cuts out from any human inhabitants of any nation an enormous proportion of the young men between seventeen and forty, leaving for the most part the women undiminished in number.

And from this two consequences arise. The first is that only a smaller number of wage-earners in the height of their power are available to supply the needs of great numbers who are not, in the strict sense of the term, wage-earners at all. And the second is that you have a devastating minority of men of child-bearing years against women of child-bearing years, which in an ostensibly monogamous Society must mean that a large number of women, in every way fit for child-bearing and the rearing of children, must be for ever forbidden this which is the most essential quality of their nature, and the greatest service they can do to the race. There was a considerable majority of women over men before the war. This was largely due to the greater death-rate among boys, to emigration, and to the greater longevity of women. But what the war has done is to cut out masses of men, all of marriageable age, of whom the great majority might have formed husbands for women now unmarried; and the others have left widows who might have added to the number of children in the community.

The philosopher, the preacher and the statesman confront this fact with an air of blank amazement. I have seen no attempt even to suggest a solution of the problem, except by such a writer as Mr. Bernard Shaw, who advocates that legalised polygamy should be accepted in the future as illegalised polygamy has been indulged in during the past. But for the most part men seem to regard the subject as almost unfit for discussion. Only the medical profession knows what enforced celibacy and sterility mean to hundreds of thousands of healthy women, and how, as some of the boldest have ventured to assert, maternity even without legalised marriage could transform the lives of those who were made to be mothers, and in such transformation enrich the human race.

*Note.*—Since this chapter was written the Report has been issued of the Registrar-General for the second quarter of 1922. It reveals how fallacious were the deductions drawn from the sudden increase of marriages and sudden

increase in birth-rate, when the soldiers returned, immediately after the war. Babies registered numbered a few over 200,000, and were 7000 odd fewer than in the previous quarter, and nearly 25,000 fewer than in the same quarter of 1921. The birth-rate was equal to an annual rate of 21.2 per 1000, which is the lowest in any second quarter ever recorded in time of peace. Controversy has raged round the interpretation of the figures which give in the poorest districts 28 per 1000 birth-rate in Shoreditch, 27 per 1000 in Poplar, and 25 in Bethnal Green, while there is only 15 per thousand in such a district as Hampstead. Many have attempted to demonstrate that such a divergence is balanced by the greater chance of the babies of Hampstead surviving, and that therefore there is no particular reason for alarm in the idea that we are breeding from lower incompetent or less energetic stock. I have found no convincing argument on this subject. It seems to be as plain as sunlight that in exact contrast to all the Malthusian prophecy, and indeed to the actual experience of Malthusian philosophy in regions where birth-control is unknown or unaccepted, the stocks which have more or less succeeded in life, and therefore by every rule of so-called Eugenics or such science as we at present understand should be reproducing themselves in large companies of children, are the stocks in which the family is severely limited to two or one, or none at all. Whereas the stocks which live in overcrowded slum dwellings in which even, if every baby was born perfectly strong in body and mind, the environment of the first decade of its life would provide a permanent handicap against success, show very little diminution in the size of the family. And the man who does not see some menace to the future prosperity of this country in such a fact, is, in famous phrase, "not the one we address on this occasion."



*"The longer I live the more convinced I become that the only two things that really count in national existence are a succession of writers of genius and the proud memories of great, noble and honourable deeds. And the writer of genius is only he whose words 'pass into proverbs among his people'; whose thoughts colour men's lives; who comes and goes with them in and out of their homesteads; who accompanies them whithersoever they may wander, whatever they may do, by whatever death they may be destined to die. For the fame of such a writer, you must look far beyond the cliques and coteries of a self-conscious culture; you must look out upon the open road and the flagged walks of cities where men and women are living their lives and playing their parts, 'the same old rôle that is what we make it: as great as we like, or as small as we like, or both great and small' (Whitman)."*

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

## CHAPTER IX

### 'HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

FOURTEEN years ago, when I was writing on the Condition of England, and attempting to diagnose the state of the mind of this strange, uncertain, unguided, mysterious multitude which we call The People, I endeavoured to approach the subject from every side conceivable. There was the record of personal experience. There was the record of the personal experience of others. There was such dim light as was given from the newspapers which they read—a light less in the record of the newspapers than in the character of the material which the people demanded from them. There was the art, the science, the religion, in so far as any of these permeated outside that tiny remnant of any classes which cared for these things at all. And to-day I have to make the same endeavour in an England so stunned by the war that, so far as I can estimate, it is neither able to rejoice in the literature of the past or to produce any new spirit in literature which can voice its own miseries or aspirations in the present.

I have even to seek the same writers as I sought at that time if I desire any intelligent light on the operations of a great calamity in the suppression or exaltation of the ideals of men.

### I

There are many authors who quite justifiably omit any consideration of the life in which they themselves are immersed, and repudiate any attempt at insight into it as much as great poets in the past have confined them-

selves to Greece and Egypt and Rome. Of such, for example, is Mr. Joseph Conrad, the wielder of the most delicate English prose of the past half-century; an alien living in England, a Pole, born remote from the sea, who has made his reputation by sea-stories and the sea atmosphere, but who would openly repudiate any idea of providing you with a picture of any part of English life, and even more of attempting to have any influence through his books on English character.

There is Mr. Chesterton, still attempting to re-echo the brave challenge of twenty years ago, when he first crashed into an astonished world with his proclamation that everything in modern existence was good and most of it divine. He still proclaims his gospel, but in a lower key. The war and the fearful effects of it have somewhat damaged the serenity of that gigantic optimist. He has seen the world fall to pieces in the extremity of misery and pain; and the proclamation of the greatness of the thistle-down or the pillar-box has passed into controversy more brilliant indeed, but almost as tedious as that of most of his competitors, of whether Germany was responsible for the war and how much we should eat of her now we have won.

And there is Mr. Belloc, his friend and colleague, essentially French in all actions and motives, one of the most distinguished figures of contemporary British literature, who thinks he knows the character of the British people, who knows nothing of the character of the British people, and who demands—and he may be right—*Germania delenda est*.

Generally you may say that but four established critics of life, who have chosen the novel or play as the medium of their expression, remain, and of these one is an alien—Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Bernard Shaw. Such literature as has been provided for us by the booksellers has been in the main an attempt to follow along the lines of these greater writers, and to follow in vain.

\* Mr. H. G. Wells is the preacher. He preaches different

ideas every few months, but he is always, preaching, and always at the moment desperately in earnest. He was preaching during the war; he has been preaching since the war; his preaching rose to international platform in the December Conference in Washington, until it was probable that he was influencing more minds and producing a greater effect on public opinion than any man alive. He still possesses his own gift of preaching through narrative; and of seeing, through things which to the ordinary observer are purely composed of the commonplace, dramas which others pass by, just life and nothing more. He performs this work far more efficiently when writing fiction than when directly addressing his readers in volumes which might be easily served up as volumes of sermons. Many of these I find to be tedious, especially when he is expounding his God to an astonished audience, or settling down to explain to an audience, equally astonished but more sceptical, how the world is to be made One. But in such a book as *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* he comes very near to his supreme effort of *Tono Bungay*—far the greatest novel of the century. Hundreds of years hence men will be turning to this great work of art to see what life was really like on this little island, which then held the gorgeous East in fee, and had spread its rulership over a quarter of the world. And they will find not a race of supermen or even a determined, united and intellectual community, but just a mixture of squalor and selfishness and sacrifice and a great crowd drifting no whither, with no knowledge of themselves or the world in which they live, or whence they had come, or whither they were going. They will find that the animating principle of all is a desperate struggle, first for existence, and then for exaltation, in the main expressed in the terms of money value; of the flotation of new companies, of intrigues to smash old ones, of the robbery of the comparatively poor in order to make the few enormously rich, of a whole race, indeed, detached from the soil and having forgotten God; thinking that the world was to continue for ever, based on a system of hatred and greed. And they

will read it in the light of the end, although the writer and his characters have no idea that the end is coming, that it is even knocking at their door. Only when the hero at the last turns from the ruin which has been made of his life by lack of any immaterial thing worth living for, and turns from making patent medicine to making destroyers, does the writer seem to have some strange indication that the world and all the lusts of it in which his characters are confined is shortly to pass away; and the Flood coming to destroy them all.

And in *Mr. Britling*, Mr. Wells probably gives us the best record that will appear of mid-war England, and this also may be read many hundred years hence. For as it will astonish people to realise from the first book that this was life in the Island Empire which seemed with such tranquillity and dignity to carry on its destined work, so they will be astonished in the second book to realise that, under such conditions as there described, the war was won. There is the same confusion within and without the mind of men who have suddenly been plucked from their accustomed courses and flung into a hurricane or a furnace. There is the same incapacity of organisation, distrust of leaders, fierce desire to do something when there is no something for it to do, fury against the universe for allowing these things to be, illogical hatred of unknown enemies, patriotic affection first experienced for a native land. All classes are breaking to pieces; all classes at first are prepared to give all; money, service and life for the community. All classes at the end when the best among them have gone, are equally determined to shelve that gift of money and service on others. There is the fact of death on a hitherto unprecedented scale; cutting away at whole families; and especially the death of the young. So that the world seems likely to be left in the control of women, old men and children. And above all, and here Mr. Wells' work is unique in war novels, there is the realisation of the gigantic madness of it all, as if it could be stopped and should be stopped, and might be stopped any day if any

man who had still retained sanity could suddenly cry out against this senseless slaughter, and restore the balance of the minds of men. And it is just because Mr. Wells is showing them no great hero but a middle-class, middle-aged, ineffective and utterly bewildered human being, as if in physical things he had suddenly been plucked by an unseen hand out of a suburban villa and planted down on an island in the South Atlantic, that the book is so valuable as a record of the time. Mr. Britling has the equipment of the majority of his fellow-citizens. He has the stupidity and patriotism of the majority; he has also the ineffectiveness of them in case of sudden danger; and the religion or lack of it of most of them. And the crash into his mind of this twilight of the gods is just a representation of what was going on in every similar fatuous, confused and well-meaning household. When they were all called up to fight a Germany they had never seen, for a cause they would never understand, this plain, harmless-looking student for the first time plunged into a world of brutal realities. M. Hanotaux says of Taine in 1870: "He now walked into the streets and heard the cry that arose from the city. Here was an intellectual drama. This short, slender, pale man munching his throat lozenges, with squinting grey eyes behind his thick glasses, had at last seen things which astonished him—dying men, flowing blood, burning cities. And this, too, had its importance, supposing the triumph of ideas to be in question." And Mr. Wells had suddenly seen "dying men, flowing blood, burning cities." I believe in the early stages of the war, when the Government contemplated the possibility of invasion, and issued a notice to the people telling all civilians how they would have to retire and take no part in resistance, Mr. Wells wrote to the papers stating that, as long as he had a pitchfork and a haystack, the Government orders remained for him inoperative. And Mr. Wells would just have been a Mr. Britling, as ineffective as any of his class when such tremendous calamity came; but quite determined to die with his pitchfork and under his haystack rather than a

retire from any enemy which set his foot on British ground.

Mr. Wells has been too busy with international controversies to have been able to turn his mind to the realities of post-war England, and it will be interesting, if and when he does so, to discover what he makes of the confusion and contests which have succeeded the national unity since the Armistice. In *The Divine Fire*, a brilliant conversation imitative of the Book of Job, he has tried to preach the Gospel of a God who is not Being but Becoming, being created by the efforts of all men of goodwill towards righteousness and tolerance and compassion. It is the same gospel as that of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Unfortunately it is of a purely literary character. It is far more a theosophy than a theology, and far more a theology than an actual faith "by which a man can live." Mr. Wells' attitude towards poverty, squalor and avoidable misery has always been one of a kind of intellectual disgust rather than of emotional pity. He sees the thing from afar off, as one who has escaped from it, is living in another world; deplures its existence, urges men to various panaceas, to clear up the mass of ignorance and ineptitude. But he never sees it as one who has lived in manhood in a London slum, or as some semi-articulate half-futile but entirely earnest Labour leader, who talks wild economics and is intellectually contemptible, but can still claw the air with a kind of undying conviction that these monstrous inequalities of fortune should no longer continue to be. Every time he gets at one of their positive solutions, Socialism, or Guild Socialism, or Webbian and Bureaucratic Socialism, or the hopes and dreams of the various fantastic, grotesque, earnest creatures who believe that the Kingdom of God may be established on earth as in heaven, that keen critical brain of his overcomes whatever natural sympathy he may have possessed for any advance towards the Dawn; and in a kind of disgust that any one of these particular theories is unable to sustain the challenge of normal human life, he proceeds to tear it to pieces with all his power of

invective and satire. He may be a leader of the whole world in his writings in interpretation of the possibility of a universal World peace. But he appears to have little to say which is helpful to humanity, of the discontent which lies at his own doorstep; either the economic results of poverty which stare him in the face, or that far deeper malady of the soul which is the conspicuous result of the last five years of war.

## II

For every one imitator of Mr. Wells' method, Mr. Arnold Bennett has ten, although the great majority of them seem to be unable to express the power, almost unanalysable, of putting down with complete indifference the bare facts of rather sordid life, and compelling you to read them. Mr. Bennett's master is, of course, Flaubert, as Flaubert is master of most of modern literature. And next to Flaubert, Turganief; just as Mr. Wells goes back to Tolstoi and the Romantics. One can imagine indeed Mr. Bennett saying: "Why drag in Flaubert? The only resemblance between us is that we each stand aside and look at life as a procession as it passes, neither judging nor condemning, but putting down exactly what we see." But of course neither puts down exactly what he sees. There must be selection in art, else you would merely have the accumulation of some gigantic record of day-by-day incident, which would run to thousands of volumes for one year alone. But Mr. Bennett is more of the Flaubert School than the Master himself. For in reading such a supreme work of art as, for example, *Madame Bovary*, you are conscious that the author is very deliberately reacting from a romantic school which cried over the sufferings of the poor and weak, and exulted in the destruction of the wicked—the school of the French Romantics or of the Victorian novelists.

But Mr. Bennett has no such definite reaction. He has no desire to counteract this school: he merely puts them by. He has himself cheerfully declared that the English



novel only began with the later nineteenth century, and that all the Dickenss and Thackerays and lavish female writers of the earlier time were not really writing novels at all, but pamphlets, or prose poems, or efforts to lacerate the feelings of their readers—no different from the crudest journalism. "The novel, as he understands it, and as he has produced it with almost sensational success, contains no stage directions "weep here" or "be angry there." It simply shows you with accuracy and with insight, and not without humour and tolerance, life as it passes :

" Les marionnettes  
Font, font, font,  
Trois petits tours  
Et puis s'en vont."

He cares nothing of whence they come or whither they go. The burden of human destiny, and any intelligible account or theory of what these queer creatures are doing in so queer a world, never troubles him at all. There is not a discussion on a religious topic in any of his books, or of anything that lies behind the painting of so fascinating and gorgeous a spectacle—fascinating and gorgeous that is to say to the man who has succeeded and is secure as he looks upon all the unfortunate or unsuccessful moving up and down in the social ant-hill or wasp's-nest, and some coming to honour and some to dishonour without any conceivable purpose or plan. The books which he has written during or since the war have not been on the scale of the great novels which will render his name immortal—*The Old Wives' Tale* or the *Clayhanger* trilogy—but the texture of them is the same. In *The Pretty Lady*, *The Roll Call*, and *Mr. Prohack* he has adopted exactly the same method, and whatever we may think of that method it provides a genuine revelation of the conditions of the time by a man of genius, all the more welcome just because he does not care, and therefore gives you the result of his own observation, and that observation comes from one of the most enlightened and critical minds in the world to-day.

• Mr. Bennett is sitting in the stalls looking at the cinema

film as it passes before him. He notes down here one thing, here another, good or evil, or generally a mixture of good and evil; "loving not, hating not, just choosing so." Remember his account in *The Pretty Lady* of the funeral service of Lord Roberts, in St. Paul's Cathedral, at which I had been present. I was so impressed by the extraordinary accuracy of detail that I asked him where he had been seated on the occasion. He told me he had not been seated at all; he had not even been in the Cathedral at the service; he had derived his accounts entirely from second-hand sources. And yet his description would stand as the most accurate and illuminating of any record of that extraordinarily emotional ceremony for all time.

In his war books he shows just the desiccation of a Society which had no real knowledge of the ruin which had come upon it, and having at heart neither faith, hope nor love, resolved itself into a fussy combination of useless charity and useless sensation of the effects of the war. At one moment these incredulously absurd creatures are making up all kind of new Societies to appeal for all kinds of new charities for "Tommy" abroad, or his wife and children at home. At another moment they are exulting in the excitement and danger of an aeroplane raid, or the possibility of the war coming into some personal contact with themselves. Beneath the air of detachment, one can, I think, see something of Mr. Bennett's utter contempt of a Society built up in comfort and security, and whose sole effort has been designed to the contrivance of ever more pleasureless methods of pleasure. The poor, who are the overwhelming majority of England, only appear in scuttling crowds, taking refuge in the Underground Tube in panic fear of destruction from some aeroplane bomb. The Middle Class, who Mr. Bennett most delights in exhibiting, and if this writer could be made to deliver a judgment, he probably regards as the centre of sanity and effort seem only to drift from their ambiguous professions into the position of combatants, not from any faith in a cause, but merely because it is the only decent thing to do. He has

indeed, certain admirations, as, for example, in his latest work, that for the permanent Civil Service as distinct from the greedy crowd of business men, who overwhelmed her, with their stupidity and inelasticity during the war. He has certain contempts for the war profiteer, for the woman of fashion and sensation who is merely eating up the lives of men in her desire for the latest amusement. He probably profoundly dislikes all this new world of new war millionaires, of business and finance triumphant, which spends its money recklessly in ignoble enjoyments and is only united by a common resolve that its taxes shall be reduced by the abandonment of money spent on the health or education of the swarming masses of the poor. But any indignation he may possess very soon vanishes in a smile and a shrug of the shoulders. "Let the wretched thing go on," one can hear him say, "until it perishes of its own intolerable stupidity. I have not made the world, and He who made it will guide. Or if He will not guide let the thing smash in pieces; in any case, it is not my business."

"If Dickens were living to-day," says Mr. Chesterton, "he would be able to do what none of us are able to do—he would be able to show us living people crying out to us for justice." But Dickens is not living to-day, and if he were, this exhibition of living people crying out for justice would form no part of a Society such as Mr. Bennett represents, except as one of the freak developments of a variegated world, in which good and evil, life and death, effort towards social regeneration and effort to counter such movement, appear equally recordable, equally admirable, and equally absurd.

### III

The third great novelist who has devoted his art to a criticism of contemporary life in England is Mr. Galsworthy. He has written of Society before and after the war, and he does not seem to appreciate any great change. His work is, indeed, so full of condemnation of the selfishness and stupidity of man's life on this planet, that there

was little prospect he would find any substantial change. So long as the poor live in privation and stunted life, adjacent to the rich who care nothing about them except to toss an occasional subscription to a hospital or a Christmas treat, for so long will this writer regard the present system of life as a thing monstrous and inhumane. He writes with less detachment than Mr. Bennett, although one can see the endeavour always to adopt the detached attitude; and he writes with less sweeping generalisation, and with none of the preaching of Mr. Wells. As one of the greatest of his contemporaries was heard to observe, "I should not like to be a Galsworthy character; they don't get so much as half a chance." He shows the infinite remoteness of the English prison system from Justice; the infinite remoteness of the folly of the strike in which each side gets exactly what it demanded before the strike began after unlimited confusion, misery and loss. He shows the profiteer triumphant; the refuse and garbage of the war shambling through back streets, uncared for and uncaring. And if judging, he only judges, as was said of Whitman, "as the light judges which falls around a helpless thing."

He is out in revolt at the squalor and stupidity of it all. More than any modern writer he can give you the sense of the passing of time, and the loves and ambitions of men, as judged by that passing; the foolishness of those who spend their life in heaping up property, only to leave it to another; the old men who acquire the means of enjoyment, only when the possibility of enjoyment is denied them; the vacuous, leaderless crowd, longing for some satisfaction which they can never obtain from any surplus of material things. It is difficult to know exactly what he wants. He preaches no social doctrine. He elaborates no spiritual ideal. But that he wants something different is certain. He is never content, like Mr. Bennett, with just looking on and laughing at the antics of this absurd creature—man in 1922; this man which, having butchered so many of his fellow-creatures, returns con-

tentedly to a Court function or a Wesleyan Sunday school. Mr. Galsworthy through his writing is eager to make life a different thing, but in so far as he can see any way at all, it is by the encouragement of such virtues as gentleness and tolerance and compassion; not with any background of a creed, or a belief in a world which will refuse to be submerged by death; but just simply because these are good things, and would make the conduct of human affairs splendid and generous, instead of squalid and base.

He has little hope of any such sudden revolution. All he can do in his plays or books is to show the rottenness of rotten people doing rotten things. But the rotten people attend his plays or read his books and announce how clever they are, and then go on doing the rotten things. His hope must be only in a far future, that vision which Mr. Yeats has described, "when men's hearts and the weather will grow more gentle as time fades into Eternity."

In one, indeed, of Mr. Galsworthy's post-war books he shows the end of the House of Property and all the curse that this gigantic property has brought upon it in the destruction of the happiness of youth. It is an epic of the change of England itself, as so many similar great properties after the collapse of the war are tumbling into dust. His hero, gazing from the high cemetery above London, near the family vault, where all the men concerned with the Property have been buried, looking over the vast confusion of London with all its smoke rising in a quiet sky, realises that the very idea of accumulation has gone—that in that cemetery is interred the England of the past generation. "A lot of people had been buried here since then, a lot of English life crumbled to mould and dust. The boom of an aeroplane passing under the golden-tinted cloud caused him to lift his eyes. The deuce of a lot of expansion had gone on, but it all came back to a cemetery—to a name and a date on a tomb." "To Let" stood as a sign over all the ambitions, the cramping respectabilities, the dominating and tyrannous standard of life of pre-war England. "To Let"—the Forsyte age, and way of life.

when a man owned his soul, his investments, and his woman, without check or question. And now the State had or would have the investments, his woman had herself, and God knew who had his soul. "To Let"—that sane and simple creed.

The old could never understand what had happened. The young seemed to be making as much a muddle of their lives as when they lived in limited and hard-working careers. No vision had come from the great practical experience of world calamity to illuminate man with any sense of an object, a meaning, or an end. The Property that was ruined might go to others, and these others would be equally as avaricious and inspired by a fight for personal accumulation as their fathers before them, and each of them equally, before any sense had come into their mind, would be cut down by the merciless hand of Death. Confronting the future, Mr. Galsworthy's hero sits "as a man might ride into a wild night, with his face to the tail of his galloping horse. Athwart the Victorian dykes the waters were rolling on property, manners and morals, on melody and the old forms of art, waters bringing to his mouth a salt taste as of blood, lapping to the foot of this Highgate Hill, where Victorianism lay buried." He will not fight them; he will just let them run their own restless course. "They would quiet down, when they had fulfilled their tidal fever of dispossessing and destroying, when the creations and the properties of others were sufficiently broken and dejected they would lapse and end. And fresh forms would rise based on an instinct older than the fever of change, the instinct of *honour*."

#### IV

To such writers criticising change and finding no good in it, you must add the work of probably the greatest of them all. In *Heartbreak House* Mr. Bernard Shaw shows the vision of a Society doomed to destruction. In this corner of the madhouse of this world called England, as

the old seaman calls it, men and women who have be divorced from the land and have no creed in religion, politics or social life, meet together to talk about the futile conditions of their own soul and the infinite boredom of their own lives. They make love to each other because they have nothing else to do ; each complacent, and tolerant, and miserable, in interchange of affection. They try to force a young girl to marry a profiteer for the sake of his millions, which are elusive millions and do not exist at all. They are entertained by a burglar whom they capture and whom they find to be no burglar at all. They never get within a hundred miles of any of life's realities. The only sane one among them, who is married to a British Civil Servant, a man who is at least doing work to some purpose, though to what purpose God only knows, tells them the truth—that they are futile when they get away from horses ; in other words, that a landed aristocracy, trying to assume a culture it could never understand instead of sticking to its own crude and barbarian ways, is bound to collapse into disgust of its own condition. Finally, as symbolic of the war, an aeroplane drops bombs upon an audience excited and stimulated for the first time by this prospect of murder or sudden death. It passes, having killed only the two thieves, the burglar and the profiteer, and leaves the rest with a sudden sense that life is once more not worth living, because there is nothing but talk and boredom and making love, and making love and talk and boredom, until the years grow nigh when they shall say, "We have no pleasure in them" ; until life, which has never really been lived, comes to an absurd and squalid end. "Vanity of vanities" is written over all Mr. Shaw's brilliant epigram and humour and impeachment of the career of comfort which has nothing to do but to make itself more comfortable. And to this life the war has brought neither wisdom nor solace ; they cannot learn, even if they would. It may have transferred the actual property of one class to that of another ; but the class of that other immediately embarks upon the same combination of foolishness

and lethargy which animated those whose possessions have been transferred. And the old rum-drinking prophet disappears, denouncing them all, with the assertion that we have a drunken captain at the helm and a crew lying sick in their hammocks below, and the only chance for England is to discover the secret of Navigation—"Navigation or be damned."

## V

Of the younger post-war critics I can trace none who have written since the war who would not come under the definition of being a conscious or unconscious disciple of one of these great writers. I am not estimating the value of British post-war literature; I am only trying to get indications of the state of the people from what post-war literature is providing us; and all the lesser and the new writers who have anything to say at all and are not merely engaged in stories of fairyland are on these lines. Some, like Mr. Wells, preach hope after madness, and cling to the belief that the world may yet be saved by some application of machinery—a League of Nations or some Association of Nations indifferent to the others, or an alliance between the two greatest of all the nations, or some other method of inculcating virtue by mechanism or through a change of Congress or Conference eliminating from the soul of mankind the seven deadly sins. Some, like Mr. Bennett—and his method is perhaps the most popular among the younger novelists—just draw pictures in which the futility and vain pursuit of happiness before the war is paralleled by the futility and vain pursuit of happiness after the war. Some, like Mr. Galsworthy, a little less hard and with a purpose of influencing an audience instead of merely intriguing it, drag in elements of mercy and pity, and reveal how the happiness of all could be increased so much, if the few would take any intelligent interest in the matter. And some, like Mr. Bernard Shaw, follow him in the school of the prophets who have the command laid on them "to prophesy against this city—whether it will hear or whether



it will forbear"; and to tell it that however seemingly great its splendour and seemingly comfortable its possessing classes, the verdict has already gone out against it that its kingdom is departed, that it has been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

And the extraordinary fact remains, that in both the two great interpreting branches of literature, fiction and poetry, not only has the war given no real inspiration and the great victory passed unsung, but among the young men, bitterness and cynicism and contempt of human life and of the foolishness of men is far more noticeable than any of such new inspiration, as filled the world, despite the defeat of the better cause, a hundred years ago. I could name at least a dozen new novels and young novelists, men and women, who possess talent if not genius, and by every one of them is the same story told. There is, first, a picture of life before the war, greedy, sensual, money-loving, indifferent to any high or spiritual ideal. There is, second, the life during the war, in which the boys brought up amid such surroundings perish with valour and honour. And there is, third, when the story is continued, the life after the war, of a greedy, sensual, money-loving Society: to which the vision of this enormous secular catastrophe has made no difference at all, except perhaps for a more determined resolve to grab the pleasures of an hour.

The poets are still more remarkable. The first stage, vigorous, though limited, is represented by such an one as Rupert Brooke, writing with the same kind of *bravura* the things that schoolboys are taught to be, the right things to think of, when man begins to slay his fellow-man:

"Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,  
Holiness lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.  
Honour has come back as a king to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we are come into our heritage."

That stage soon passed, and there came a long period in which all the poetry of the war was that of loss and longing

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and regret. Tragic visions of the English countryside which they would never see again, tragic laments at the realisation that life would be cut off so young, with none of its possibilities realised, tragic acceptance, for the most part, of this necessary or unavoidable destruction of youth; as in Alan Seeger's poem before he died :

- "I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air—  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath—  
It may be I shall pass him still.  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

- • God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillow'd in silk and scented down,  
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous."

And the third stage is one of complete disillusion and disgust; of hatred of the old men who have sent the young men to die; of hatred and contempt for the army command and staff; which has not even the sense to make itself intelligent enough to give a chance of living to the common soldier; of hatred and contempt of the politician and diplomat, whose actions have resulted in the young men of one nation slaughtering in all methods of torture

and hideous mutilation the young men of another with whom they had no quarrel :

"A thin line swinging forward to kill,  
And a man driven mad by the din.  
Music-hall songs about 'Kaiser Bill'  
And 'The march through the streets of Berlin.'

Grey beards prattling round the fire  
Of the good the war has done.  
Three men rotting upon the wire;  
And each of them had a son.

A soldier who once was fresh and clean  
Lost to himself in whoring and drink,  
Blind to what will be and what has been,  
Only aware that he must not think.

In the pulpit a parson preaching lies,  
Babbling of honour and sacrifice.

Fragments flutter in and out.  
Christ! what is it all about?"

Such poets and novelists are facing reality, and perhaps it is better that reality should be faced than that we should live in a world of make-believe. But it is the record of men dying first in body and then in soul in a world where nothing worth preserving remains alive. It is an impeachment of man and of God. It carries with it nothing of the spirit of inspiration for some future generation, when

"Earlier shall the roses blow,  
In after years, those happier years.  
And children weep, when we lie low,  
Far fewer tears, far softer tears."

It is dust falling into dust, not in some high vision of heroic enterprise, but as a consequence of the infinite stupidity of mankind. You may search in vain the whole of post-war literature of the young men and young women who should be inspiring such visions and dreams as poets like Shelley or reformers like Bentham and Hazlitt and

Mill and the Utilitarians, still nursing the unconquerable hope even although the triumph of the old kings had appeared to make such hope a fantastic dream. To-day we are told that we have achieved a great victory for freedom ; and all that we can find in literature is some boy, before he died, cursing those who have sent him to death, or some survivor exercising his mordant humour on the puppets and mannikins who rule mankind.

Yet I cannot but believe that this period of darkness and despair in literature is but the product on the one hand, of the great loss whose immensity none of us yet realises, and on the other the time of sordidness and squalor which has succeeded the triumph of the fighting men. I shall refuse to banish the hope that any writer recording the condition of England fifteen years hence will not be able to rejoice over those who have struggled through the period when the young had ceased to believe in God or man, and find those who despite calamities in body and spirit will again be inspiring humanity towards " the unity and release and triumph of mankind."

*“Humanity is not destined permanently to inhabit ruins.”*  
COUSIN.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DOLDRUMS

THE Established Church is in the doldrums. So indeed are all the Churches. It is not that any other Evangelical or Catholic body is obtaining adherents which the Church is losing, or exhibiting some great "forward" movement to which the Church remains indifferent. It is that all the organised religious bodies are in the doldrums. So, to a great extent, are the ethical and progressive teachings which are outside the Churches. A few commendable and earnest persons make some movement which sounds like an advance. The great mass remain profoundly indifferent.

#### I

The war, and the experience, first of material gain and then of great suffering amongst the poorest which has followed, has for the time sapped the strength of the Church and seemingly forbidden a fresh advance. Tens of thousands of convinced ardent Churchmen, many of whom would be to-day in orders, with intellect, determination and devotion behind them, lie buried in the cemeteries of the dead. It will take twenty years at least to raise up a similar generation. The enormous taxation has hit the Established Church harder than any religious body. For in general summary, the landed classes, who are all selling their land to pay for the interest on the national debt, were those who maintained the village Churches and the village Church schools, and who contributed most to all the funds necessary for the building and endowment of Churches. While the people who receive that interest—who lent the money to the

Government—are mostly the War Profiteers, who care nothing for the Anglican or indeed for any other Church at all. At the same time the clergy with their small fixed incomes are being harassed out of their lives by the fact that the £1 of pre-war days is now only worth 10s.

So that in both ways the Church suffers. If the Church is in the doldrums the country is in the doldrums. The great gifts which we see American rich men giving to Universities and Hospitals, or the benefactions left at death, are almost unknown here. It is not that money formerly given to Cathedrals is now given to worthy secular objects. It is that the money given formerly to Church effort is now not given to anything at all. Our London hospitals are all half bankrupt. The finances of Oxford and Cambridge, as the Royal Commission has just reported, are in a parlous condition. Institutions for scientific research cry frantically for funds with very little response. We are now begging from the whole world for money to keep the very stones together of St. Paul's, Lincoln, York, and other priceless treasures of man's building.

I do not wish to draw too black a picture. There is an immense amount of quiet, devoted work being continued by men and women in thousands of parishes of England. There is devotion to the Christian faith, derived from belief in God as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and in Jesus Christ, not only as an example of good conduct, but as exercising redemptive power through the headship of a Kingdom of Righteousness, which shall have no end. If the Christian standard of morality appears to have received a sudden blow which has let loose the meanest and most flagrant of the deadly sins, this is but, I believe, a common aftermath of all wars, through the experience of which the standards and sanities which formerly prevailed are for a time knocked aside. That there will be recovery is certain. But for the moment the men who preach austerity or even simplicity of life are in the background. And the visitor to London would think

that, as far as enjoyment and any sex standards are concerned, all restraints and limitations had been thrown aside.

But although London is a Pagan city—and was so before the war—England is not a heathen nation : and when you get in the provinces you find an almost unexpected loyalty to the Christian doctrine and a definite attempt, amongst members of all classes, to lead the Christian life.

The Church undoubtedly suffers, in any suggestion of some concerted advance—either to regain England to Christianity, or to compel Society to remedy intolerable Social evils, or to perfect its own organisation and remove the more flagrant abuses from it, or to initiate another great world crusade of missionary effort, by the fact that all its most honoured leaders have passed the threescore years and ten of man's allotted days, and cannot now unite in effort towards some great appeal which demands unusual energy. The Archbishop of Canterbury is approaching eighty ; as wise and cautious in council as ever before, but conspicuously now content to maintain an inheritance uninjured, for another generation to use. The Bishop of Winchester, perhaps the most respected of all, a statesman, a theologian and a man of saintly life, is not far from the same age, and overburdened with the mere routine work of his huge diocese. Bishop Gore, now over seventy, has escaped that routine work, but is practically committing his latter days to the restatement of the Catholic theology, as he understands it, against the attacks of the Modernists. The Dean of St. Paul's is, of course, a brilliant, if isolated, thinker, writing and talking voluminously, and always with great distinction of thought and phrase. But he would never set himself to head a movement which requires enthusiasm for success. He is more impressive on larger Social questions than on definite subjects of Christian revival. And his apparently fierce hatred of the working man and the poor, although it pleases the newspapers of a class, excites keen resentment amongst those who have no power of stating their side of the question.

For the rest, the diocesan bishops carry out dutifully



the work of their dioceses. They are good men acting according to their lights. They keep alive the apparatus of Church organisation. But they speak with no voice of inspiration. It may be that the Government, in choosing harmless, safe men, have exalted mediocrity over talent and devotion. That is always a danger in an Established Church. But there are not many conspicuous figures, outside the episcopate, whom one would feel could bring an uprush of enthusiasm and vigorous life into the Upper House of Convocation.

There are isolated plots or pools of interesting experiment, which relieve a somewhat dead surface of monotony. Thus even in material things, Liverpool courageously continues the building of her great Cathedral, and with some civic patriotism the city has bought the freehold of the site. When completed, this will be the solitary Anglican Cathedral of the twentieth century: for I know of no others that are contemplated. Knutsford, where a derelict gaul was converted into a training college of ex-soldiers for Holy Orders, seemed to open possibilities of the continuing of the Ministry by men other than a limited rich class, with personal knowledge of the life of the poorest. But owing to the failure of the financial appeals of the Representative Church Council, Knutsford is to be closed down. One may hope for something, however, from the men who have already been ordained, and yet can claim to be Comrades of the Great War. Mr. Percy Dearmer, the solitary survivor of our old Christian Social Union, has united with Miss Maud Royden in a Church filled always to overflowing, in which the claims of Labour and the Ministry of women are alike set forth defiantly. Mr. Conrad Noel, in his village Cathedral Church at Thaxted, is supported by his parishioners when he hangs up the Red Flag and the flag of Sinn Féin.

But the chief centre of active life still remains the intellectual fight of the younger "Modernists" for the toleration of their doctrines within the boundaries of the Anglican Church, and for the spreading of them amongst

the younger men of their generation. It is unfortunate that in what they think to be an honest, intellectual belief—a faith which may be accepted by those whose mind cannot accept the ancient creeds in their totality,—the appeal becomes more and more to the individual, and less and less the interpretation of the Church as a corporate unity, setting up the banner of Social Righteousness and demanding, in Kingsley's famous words, "Justice from God to those whom men deride."

The monstrous inequalities of fortune between the "sons of one Father" go undenounced. There is toleration for the special sins of the rich. Avarice is tacitly omitted from the list of the seven deadly sins. The Church makes no attempt to compel the State to face realities. The Poor perish—sometimes in body in diseases which could be easily cured; more often in mind, in a kind of bewildered paralysis. And no man lays it to heart. In the great strikes for subsistence of former years—notably the London Dock strike of 1889—the Bishop of London and Cardinal Manning united, as champions of the poor, to procure an honest settlement. In the great strikes which have torn England to pieces, in post-war England, and left a legacy of bitterness which will last long, the Church, though strongly represented in the House of Lords, has just said—nothing.

The Doldrums will pass. Artistic and literary creation are almost as much embedded in them as religious progress. A "Church Congress" still remains as reputable and vigorous as representative caucuses of any of the political parties. And the debates of the Representative Church Council (although that Council is almost entirely confined to the old, aristocratic and landed class) are certainly as eloquent and informing as the debates of the House of Commons. But we earnestly look for the time when in the course of Providence the command will issue, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these dry bones that they may live. And they lived and arose and stood up an exceeding great army."

## II

It may be something of the disillusionment of middle age, but I cannot help thinking that twenty years ago the younger men, clergy and layman, were preaching a gospel with vigour and sincerity which to-day finds no advocates. I remember the days of the Christian Social Union, with the extraordinary wisdom and genius of Bishop Westcott at the head of it, and with Scott Holland and Gilbert Chesterton and myself and others conducting "crusades" in the great cities of England, where we would fill the largest halls in, say, the railway sheds at Derby, or Saint George's Hall at Bradford, or the great Public Hall at Leeds; in which, although our doctrines scared the local clergy out of their wits, the packed audiences of the common people heard us gladly. But the thing appears at the moment dead, and our effort expended in vain. And those who still remember the good times, when so much of the Church that was alive with names like Stanton and Dolling was on the side of the poor, must feel some sadness in gazing over the desolation of an organisation which does indeed do an enormous amount of efficient and good work, but which cannot at the moment claim to present any vision capable of combating the prevailing materialism.

Shortly after the war, a report was issued, signed by members of all the religious bodies, of the experience of chaplains in dealing with the ordinary adult male soldier during the war. The report, if pessimistic, had at least the merits of candour. The general testimony was that, with occasional distinguished exception, this great mass of British male young adult life was facing death and being killed without any of the conviction of a spiritual existence, a dominating Providence, or a future life, which have been entertained unchallenged for nearly two thousand years. It was not the war which had made this change. It was the war which had revealed this change. England, according to these testimonies, was no longer Christian, and become pagan; and the great majority of the male popula-

tion of England had completely ceased to believe in the faith of their forefathers. "The visible," cried Carlyle, "speedily becomes the bestial when it rests not on the invisible." "If they do abolish God from their own poor benighted hearts," he asserted, "there will be seen for some length of time (perhaps for some generations) such a world as few are dreaming of."

There is still a desperate desire for communication with the dead. I was even told recently by one Labour leader that the various methods of dealing with forces still not understood—attempts to use planchette or automatic writing or the various ways by which some have been convinced that they are conversing with the spirit of their friends has even quenched enthusiasm for the Labour movement itself. Honest men and charlatans rival each other in the issuing of messages from another world, consisting in the main either of watery reminiscences of the Protestant theological conception of heaven or of the frank description of the dead smoking tobacco and watching football matches, and generally engaged in having a "good time." One would like to hear the criticism of such a great and sombre spirit as Dante upon such methods of dealing with the tremendous realities of human existence. But apart from these experimental madneses, battenning merely on the great longing for communication between lover and lover, there is little sign of any returning interest in the problem of the meaning and purpose of human destiny. There is no St. Francis preaching the gospel of poverty. There is no Spurgeon attracting so many thousands with his austere gospel as to cause the breaking down of the barriers and the actual death of many of the crowd. There is no Newman with that extraordinary sincere and fascinating appeal which made men's hearts turn from the futility of earthly things and inspire them with "the nostalgia of the infinite." There are no William and Catherine Booths who amidst general obloquy and persecution possessed the secret of the redemption of souls and, as in Mr. Lindsey's poem, lead their company of ex-prostitutes and thieves

and scoundrels triumphantly through an astonished heaven to the feet of Christ.

The tide of the spirit runs low. It runs low within the churches and outside them. The crowd is still fighting for the right to live. The efficient are expending their triumphs in the pleasures of the day. Only the despised Quakers, many of them conscientious objectors during the war, still carry on the work throughout Europe of alleviating human misery and carrying through schemes for the betterment of populations sunk in darkness and without hope, facing, and many enduring, death, inspired by their creed. The one people whom, as an ex-Prime Minister said to me, have never been tested and found wanting. There is no effective appeal either to courage, creation or sacrifice. England waits for some inspiration which will illuminate thought and inspire action in a world of spiritual values towards an impulse, or a goal.

### III

Yet perhaps this summary exhibits the work of a mind too readily yielding to despair. John Ruskin, toward the end of a series of writings in which he had found no element to encourage and cheer him in any future spiritual revival, confessed that his observation had been to some extent superficial. "Looking back upon my efforts for the last twenty years"—so runs the last famous 96th letter of the *Fors Clavigera*—"I believe that their failure has been in very great part owing to my compromise with the infidelity of this outer world, and my endeavour to base my pleading upon motives of prudence and kindness, instead of on the primary duty of loving God—foundation other than which can no man lay. I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility; nor was I the least aware how many entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom." Partly in consequence of great illnesses, he was

brought in contact with friends, who "have shown me, with lovely initiation, in how many secret places the prayer was made which I had foolishly listened for at the corners of the street; and on how many hills which I had thought left desolate, the Hosts of Heaven still moved in chariots of fire."

Let us leave off for the moment seeking for great inspiration among dominant leaders and uttering complaints because these leaders are not present, and the inspiration is denied. Go down to the mass of the common people, of whom Lincoln said in famous phrase that God must have loved them, because He made so many of them. You will find in every town and city, and almost in every village, those among them who are directing their life towards non-material ideas, and who cherish some vision of a world where the values between things temporal and things eternal are different from that of men's daily accepted standard. They belong to divers religions, many of which condemn each other, or are astonished at each other; and they derive the inner springs of a life which is more concerned with the love of God and man, realised in action, than with the determination of "getting on" and acquiring great possessions. They are the "Remnant" of which a great writer has spoken. And by that Remnant the world may yet be saved.

*"We should draw no horoscopes ; we should expect little, for what we expect will not come to pass. Revolutions, re-formations—these vast movements into which heroes and saints have flung themselves, in the belief that they were the dawn of the millennium—have not borne the fruit which they looked for. Millenniums are still far away. These great convulsions leave the world changed, perhaps improved, but not improved as the actors in them hoped it would be. Luther would have gone to work with less heart could he have foreseen the Thirty Year: War, and in the distance the theology of Tübingen. Washington might have hesitated to draw the sword against England, could he have seen the country which he made, as we see it now."*

J. A. FROUDE. .

## CHAPTER XI

### IN AFTER YEARS

#### I

IN material change and especially the increasing progress of scientific invention applied to the service of man, one need have no fear of the future. The advance in discovery, and in the applications of that discovery to what are sometimes regarded as a means of comfort and enjoyment, continues through peace and war, and even the dolorous peace which succeeds war, and has been greater during the last twenty years than in any similar period of human experience. It is true that the advance is in the main in mechanical appliance. Man can get quicker from here to there, or speak astonishingly to his fellow-man from there to here, with no intermediate machinery. Acceleration is the note of these new discoveries and the object, when analysed, appears on the whole to do things more rapidly or to increase verbal or actual communication by the use of forces which no man understands. The cleverest scientist in Europe could give you no definition of electricity, although this same mysterious and indefinable thing can be used to light whole cities or drive great trains and waggons, and be carried by wire through hundreds of miles, to turn the machinery of great factories and workshops, and even be used to complete pleasure-toys for little children. The whole of the theory of science which once carried on a futile war with so-called religion, in more or less dogmatic statements of what the nature of the universe really is, has vanished like a dream. If to-day I had given the answers to questions which I gave thirty years ago in the Cambridge Natural Science Tripos examination, instead of receiving a first-class, I should undoubtedly have been



"ploughed" as an imbecile. And yet every professor and teacher was as resolute in his dogmatism then as any of the theologians whom they affected to despise. And I would be content to prophesy that any answers given this year to any examinations in the higher sciences, which would to-day secure honour, in thirty years would ensure a similar fate. When Dr. Einstein and his followers can challenge the law of gravitation, and not without success, you must feel that the bottom is dropping out of your world.

But although thus futile in any guidance concerning the nature and being either of man or the universe in which he lives, the work of these days of those practical adventurers who have given man increasing control over natural forces offers hope for an almost boundless future. For how many million of years, for example, has man failed to be able to rise successfully more than ten feet above the surface of the ground, and for how many hundreds had he come to accept the belief that except by the futility of some monstrous balloon he was destined to remain there? And yet to-day, in machines heavier than air, he can circumnavigate the globe, and it is quite clear that he is only beginning to deal with the possibilities of a transformation in physical conditions greater than any since the days of the cave men. In 1834 Sir Robert Peel, then staying in Rome, was summoned to take charge of His Majesty's Government in London. With every assistance possible in the machinery of those days, he achieved the journey home in about a fortnight—a time substantially the same as that which would have been achieved by a Roman Governor on the same journey two thousand years ago. In 1908 I pointed out this in contrast with the fact that in that day he could have reached his destination in less than eighteen hours. But in 1928, under similar circumstance, by fast, safe and efficient aeroplane service, in perhaps one-tenth of that time. And the human race, if it wants to move about, will be able to move from England to the Dominions or to America in as much contrast with the luxurious ocean liners of to-day, as these contrast with the three tiny ships in which

Columbus sailed to discover a new world. Whether such "moving about" is of advantage to the spirit, or even to the happiness of man, remains a problem which each must answer for himself. Columbus, with the great red cross on his sails, was inspired by one motive, to obtain the wealth of the Indies for the raising of a new Crusade, which would finally rescue the Sepulchre of Christ from the hand of the infidel. No such motive, I should assume, animates any considerable number of the passengers in the *Majestic* or the *Aquitania* or any other marvels of luxurious sea voyage, nor will animate the occupants of the even more luxurious air vessels, which will traverse the Atlantic in a day.

But the life of a man is threescore years and ten, or it may be fourscore years. And this is progress or acceleration which seems to be acceptable without an ideal while those years so quickly pass.

Or you may take another example, more directly conducive to human welfare. In our days of scientific research, we had almost given up the attempt to fix the nitrogen atom of the air to the carbo-hydrates as an impossible adventure. But when the German chemists during the war are deprived of normal fertilisers they contrive to make this great discovery, and in Germany, chemical factories are turning out artificial fertilisers to-day. What does this mean? It means that man has accomplished the first and most difficult step towards the creation of proteids, not by sheep and cattle or the variegated vegetation which he has cultivated so long, but by the accurate adjustment of inorganic chemical compounds in the laboratory. It means that man will be able at no distant date to support life on a few tabloids similar to the tabloid medicines of to-day; and that means also a complete change in our present conception of existence. You may consider, for example, the problem of war, if war in its present methods can continue, as affected by the fact that the whole gigantic machinery of supply and transport could be swept aside, and the soldiers go into the fighting with a box of lozenges which would sustain them for ten or twelve or fifteen days.

Or you may consider how a relief could be achieved to the hitherto permanent poverty of mankind, in which for years and generations and centuries hunger has always been gnawing at the body of a large proportion of the human race, if by simple and cheap scientific manufactures that hunger could be allayed.

Or take for a final example the question of power. We are sometimes told the secret of England's commercial prosperity is its coal, and men write mournfully of how soon the paying seams will be exhausted and that prosperity disappear. But already, and in a very few years, a potent source of power, oil, has very largely challenged that coal supremacy. The harnessing of the tides, the utilisation of rivers and waterfalls for the generation of electric power, will provide another source of alternative energy which mechanical science will have effected before a hundred years have gone. And behind all this, research is hovering on the edge of the greatest discovery of all time—the dissociation of the atom—which will make all other forms of energy negligible, and either deliver or destroy the human race. For if such dissociation can be conducted under man's regulation, man will have achieved the secret of the fabled immortals and be able to walk easily in all the dreams of a renovated life, which have been the ideas of philosophers and the builders of Utopias for all ages. But if such dissociation escapes man's regulation, the strange prophecy of Shakespeare may become literally true. The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, ay, and the great globe itself and all that it inherits, shall dissolve, leaving not a wrack—but helium—behind.

Nor can pride in the patience and devotion and indefatigable work of man be absent when one realises the accomplishment of medical skill and the enormous relief of pain as well as the saving of human life. There have never been any such statistics of mortality as in the four and a half years' war in the West. Not only were the great diseases, such as typhus and typhoid, kept out from destroying combatants who have never before been assailed by such

hideous poisons or tormented by the long months in the sodden trenches which were themselves breeders of disease. The usual ratio of mortality between disease and casualties was turned completely upside down. And the percentage of men who recovered from wounds would have astonished all those who have previously conducted the work of destruction. What has been done in war can equally be done in peace. We have already completely removed the terrors which used to be associated with certain diseases, and we have arranged that other diseases which once scourged "this blessed plot, this realm, this England," shall never even approach our shores. Tuberculosis and venereal diseases still account for an overwhelming proportion of the deaths of the population, and we have yet found no remedy for the visitations of cancer. But controversy rages concerning the first two which is undoubtedly soon to initiate effective methods of prevention, and no one doubts that the third will yield in a generation to the unconquerable ingenuity of mankind. The race is destined to triumph over the blind and brutal forces of chance and necessity which formerly admitted it to but a short and precarious life. And if this present generation dies, not having seen the promises, it can die in confidence that the promises will be fulfilled.

## II

It is when we pass from material to moral evolution that the spirit of man grows more doubtful.

In the days before the war men had reason to be proud of their efforts at creating a material civilisation. Wealth was increasing enormously year by year, and with wealth was increasing material luxury. So that men and women moved about from place to place with greater celerity and greater ease than they had ever done before: and more men and women every year were able to consume rich wines and food, and more elaborate spas and watering-places were being opened, in order that their bodies might

recover from that consumption. And you could send more letters at cheaper rates to the ends of the earth, and you could drive faster in clouds of dust along the great roads of Europe than man had ever done before, and traverse the seas in great ships with gold-enamelled bedrooms, and halls decorated with every obvious exhibition of ostentatious and lavish expenditure.

Suddenly a cloud came out of the sky no bigger than a man's hand, and the air was filled with an abundance of rain. The rain was one of blood. Great captains of industry, before whom men had bowed in adoration, found themselves as helpless as the humblest mountain peasant. Some committed suicide, some cursed whatever gods they worshipped, some clawed together their broken fortunes, in a world where all their past enjoyments and future ambitions had been cut short as by a razor's edge. Men reeled back into the spirit of the Stone Age, each grappling with the other in the darkness, in endeavour to tear the body from the soul. A considerable part of the accumulated wealth disappeared like fireworks with no beneficent or pleasure-giving result in its departure.

They had heaped all this up for fifty years, and it had vanished almost in a night and a day. At the end, kings and princes who had ruled great territories and been surrounded by brilliant courts, whose words had been as those of gods, went shambling off with all their power and riches torn from them, and no one so poor as to do them reverence.

Men had appreciated the hard facts of the visible—so many gold sovereigns, so many brilliant palaces, so many great factories and ships and railways and motor-cars. They had failed to realise that all these counted as nothing compared to the invisible. They were by-products of the spirit of man and by the spirit of man they were destroyed, because that spirit had turned sour in the midst of such prosperity and become a prey to avarice and cowardice and anger and hatred and the rest of the deadly sins.

And until those deadly sins can be excised from the

mind of humanity, there is certainty that the reconstruction of even a more brilliant civilisation will come to a similar end. "Can you really turn a ray of light by magnetism?" cried Carlyle once savagely. "And if you can, why should I care?" Civilisation gave us the cinema, and for years, whenever I visited the "movies," I always seemed to run into dramas of adultery and finance in Chicago. There was always a great going of enormously large and enormously fast motors, pulling up at enormously expensive houses, from which emerged clean-shaved, square-jawed Americans wrangling over the future of each other's wives. It is now giving us "broad-casting" by which, for a ridiculously small price, you can sit in your own room and from the great transmitters listen to the fatuous noises of the world. From a transmitter placed in the House of Commons you will be able to hear the daily drip of Parliamentary debate, until, like most actual visitors, you get astonished and tired of it, and switch on to the latest musical comedy or revue. Situated in Birmingham or Sheffield the more devout will be able to enjoy the service at (say) Westminster Abbey, the music and the prayers and the popular preacher, while seated in their own arm-chairs. Have they gained much, if the whole concoction is but a ceremonial continuance of a religion which was once alive and is now to them dead? If a Prime Minister or a leader of an Opposition wishes to address an audience he can speak in his own room and millions will wait upon his utterances. But of what advantage is this if it is the demagogue talking clap-trap and merely multiplying the method of deceiving or coarsening the mind of men? And we shall have transmitters, as described with extraordinary foresight by Mr. Wells, in which brazen instruments will shout, "Yep, yep! buy a live paper," as each pours out news of the latest murder or adultery or unnatural crime, or transmits the Government or the owner's latest lies.

You think it wonderful, wrote Matthew Arnold to Victorian England, because your letters are transferred from Camberwell to Islington five times a day and

retransferred from Islington to Camberwell. You do not think it wonderful that the letters can only carry news to Islington of a dismal illiterate life in Camberwell and to Camberwell of a dismal illiterate life in Islington.

And the same criticism can be advanced against every belief that by the development of efficient machinery, even Government machinery, you can cure the soul of man from the dark forces which he has inherited from unnumbered generations, and so make life a happy or a noble thing.

Consider, for example, increased facilities of locomotion. If imagination is dead, if faith in immortality, not merely personal, but in any immortal quality, has been brushed aside, and if the life of humanity appears without a meaning or an end, I cannot see that much advantage can be obtained by the fact that men and women can move quickly and comfortably over the habitable globe. Such things have been tried before, and in it a civilisation died.

"In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay,  
He drove abroad in furious guise  
Along the Appian Way.

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crowned his head with flowers.  
Nor easier nor no quicker passed  
The impracticable hours."

If we can have our breakfast in London and our dinner in New York, traversing the great intervening distances by fast and efficient airships, eating substantial meals on the way, while the mechanical apparatus replaces all natural human exercise, with the sole desire to have more meals, more elaboration of surrounding life, more forced and foolish conversation, more advertisement of our name in the papers, are we really better off than the peasant who goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening, and whose life has been sustained by a vision of God? Is this the passing, easier or quicker, of the impracticable hours

That vision appears to be denied to England after war. Until it is regained, no happiness or tranquillity is possible for the nation. Nor is there any security that an increasing mechanical invention will not destroy a bewildered and unhappy people. The tribute still rings out, especially to the young, to the greatest of England's practical idealists, "You have so lived and worked as to have kept the soul alive in England." Let those who love this country, as Shakespeare described it, this "land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land," take this utterance as an inspiration and an ideal; setting themselves to discover how they can bring mercy and pity, a resolute sense of justice, a purity which is passionate, a love of simplicity and an appreciation of the greatness of human life, into the common ways of men.

THE END



